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ICE CITY *of the* GORGON

RICHARD S. SHAVER and CHESTER S. GEIER

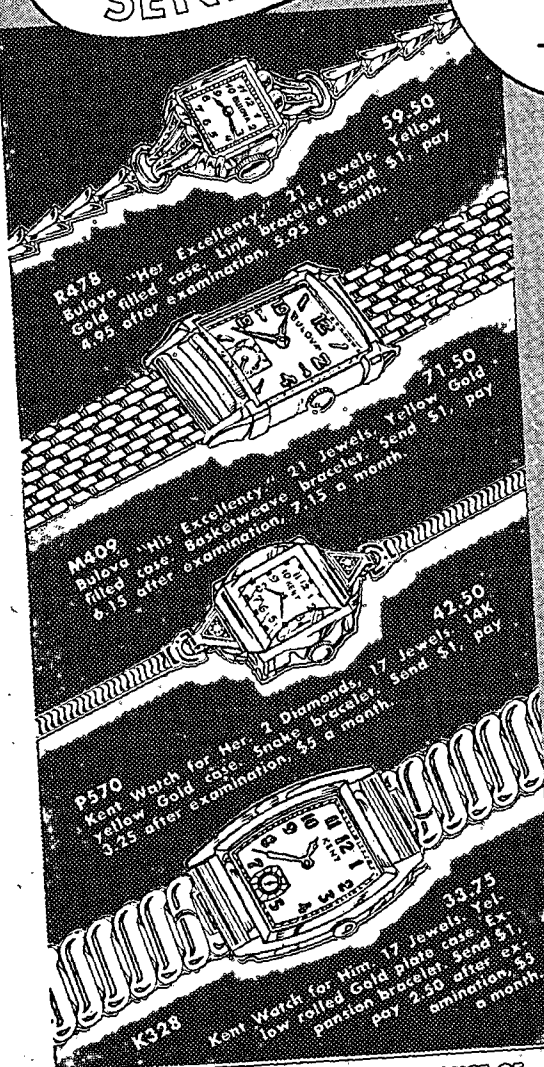
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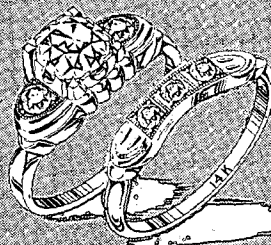
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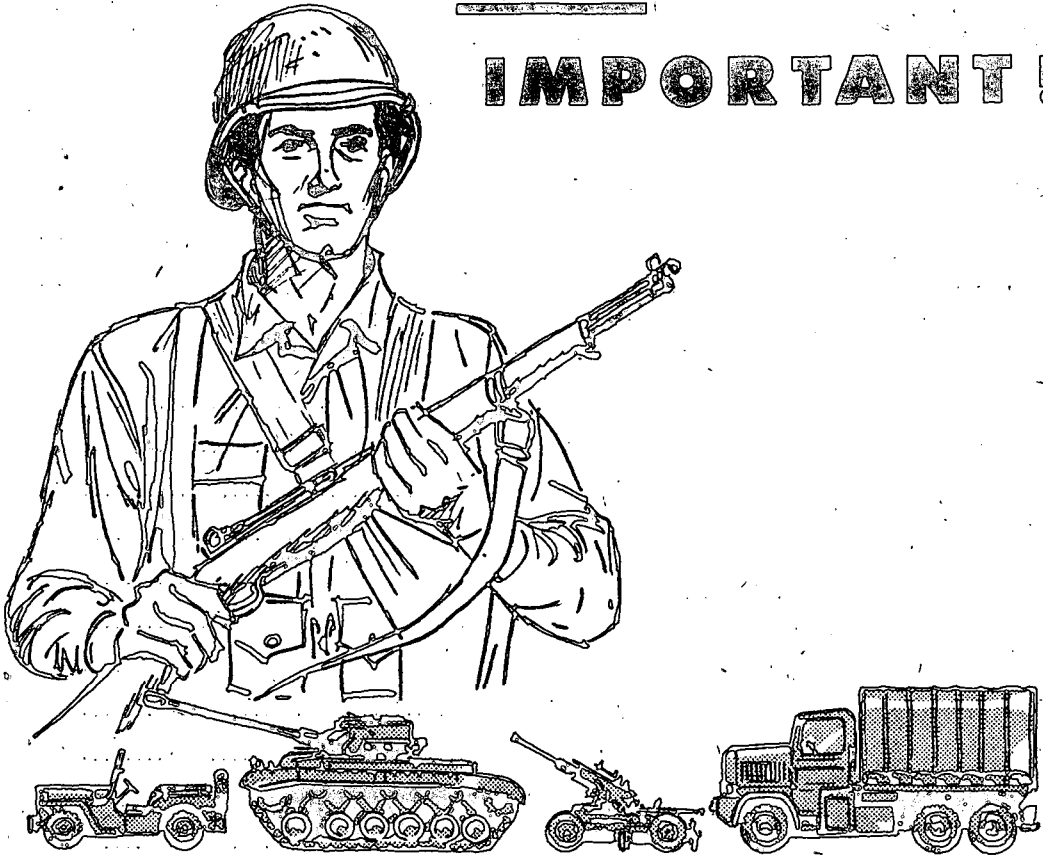
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All Stories Complete

ICE CITY OF THE GORGON (Novelet—32,000) by Richard S. Shaver & Chester S. Geier..... 8

Illustrated by Rod Ruth

The Gorgon really existed, and she held in frozen thrall the most beautiful girls in the world.

THE PIED PIPER OF SPACE (Short—4,500) by S. M. Tenneshaw..... 66

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THE OCEAN DEN OF MERCURY (Novelet—27,000) by Miles Shelton..... 100

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Could human beings really exist in this underground ocean on Mercury—could they be Earthmen?

Cover painting by Robert Gibson Jones, illustrating a scene from "Ice-City Of The Gorgon."

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The OBSERVATORY

..... by the Editor

NOW that science has proved in so sensational a manner at least two phases of the Shaver Mystery, we have a prediction to make. We predict, based on evidence now in this editor's possession, that it will be *definitely proved* that space ships are visiting the earth *right now*. We label this as *our opinion* at the present moment, and we take full responsibility for the statement. But don't be surprised when we are proven to be perfectly correct. When the proof does appear, we will attempt to be the first to present it, but it will be most probable that since we must work three months in advance, we will be scooped. If we are, consider this paragraph a scoop of a scoop!

THE question arises, if space ships do visit the earth, is it a matter of "national security?" and may we talk about it? Let's get that straight among those readers who have advanced that question in personal conversations to your editor. Whether or not it is a matter of national security, of course, depends on whether they attack us. Certainly an attack from outer space imperils our national security. We'd be at war with an enemy who would have a decided advantage, but howinell would *he* understand *our* talk and what would be the difference if he did? It would be like us understanding the ant's conversation about our descending foot, flattening their anthill. Perhaps in wartime, our military would clamp down on all talk concerning military matters. But right now we aren't at war with anybody, and we, in America, have the right of free speech, and we can talk about anything we please. For which we can be sued by other Americans in the courts if it is libelous or damaging. But there positively is no censorship on free speech, free press, free radio, free any kind of gab. Those readers who wonder about such things would do well to read the Bill of Rights and the Constitution, and listen less to those elements among us who whisper about our "freedom" not being freedom at all. If there is, or has been, any censorship on free speech, it's just because somebody has fallen for a bluff. For the benefit of those readers who are under the impression that there was a censorship on the now famous flying saucers, that's just plain poppycock. There never was any censorship (other than that of individual newspaper editors who "laid off"

of a subject that was beginning to look ridiculous), and any authority you ask will tell you the same thing!

THIS reminds us of the story during the war, of how uncomfortable the heads of the "Manhattan Project" were because science fiction magazines were giving away atom secrets in merry fashion. At first a "leak" was suspected, then they learned the truth—that science fiction writers and editors can and do predict future science from present fact with incredible accuracy. So, rather than draw enemy attention to actual atom experiments, by suppressing the science fiction magazines, they let them say what they wanted. Now, after the war, we know how excellent our writers really were in their craft. They'd make cracker-jack scientists in the main! Today, the same thing is happening. For more than twenty years we've been talking about space ships, and maybe we're right at last! But "authorities" who will get the first reports of the mysterious craft, when they appear, will think there is a "leak" if they read any old issue of *Amazing Stories* at all! Moral: More "authorities" ought to read science fiction—they won't be so surprised by logical developments as they develop.

ACTUALLY, we think important governmental agencies do read *Amazing Stories*. We know at least one man in Chicago who does, because we call him up every time we get some hot news on "events in the sky" and he pays us visits and calls us in return, evidencing great interest in our science "fiction". Our intelligence officers are a grand bunch of guys, let us tell you, and this one's the spittin' image of the old-time science fiction heroes we used to write about in *Amazing Stories*. You gals should see him. He's Buck Rogers come to life! And we sure hope we can get a scoop for him if we can possibly dig up any proof on the spaceships before one lands at La Guardia Field!

RECENTLY we introduced a prominent newspaper man to Charles Fort's books, and ever since his aviation column has been full of space ships. Charles Fort should be alive today—he'd have a picnic . . . and aren't we all!

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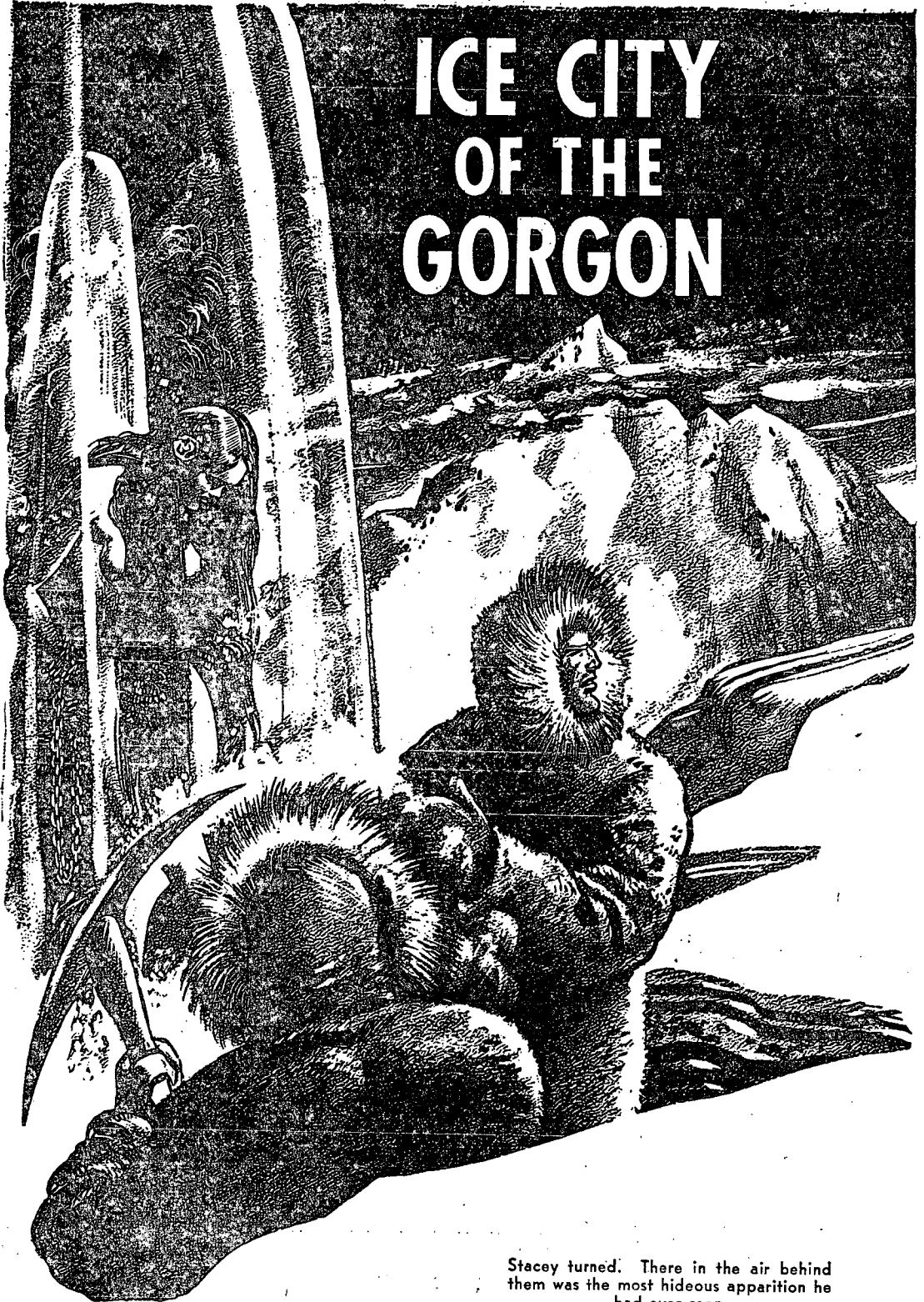
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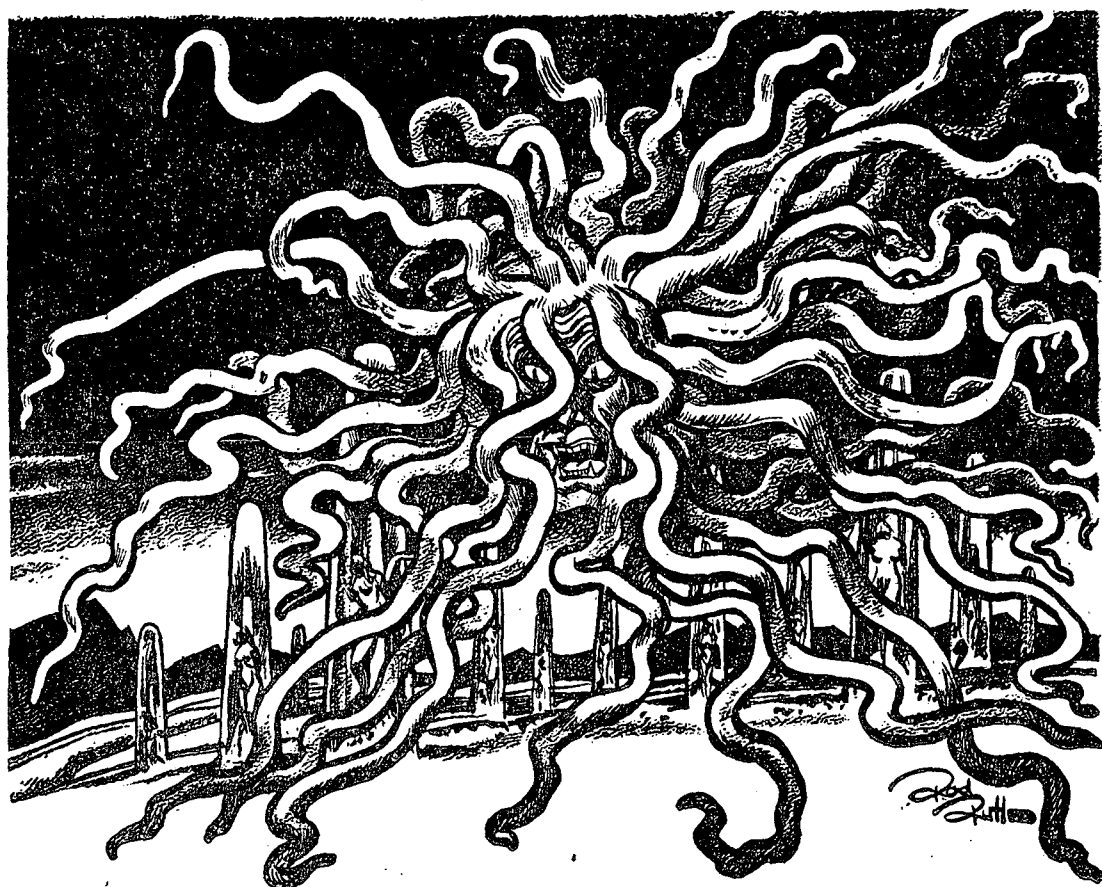
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ICE CITY OF THE GORGON



Stacey turned. There in the air behind them was the most hideous apparition he had ever seen



by **RICHARD S. SHAVER**
and **CHESTER S. GEIER**

Does anything like the legendary Gorgon actually exist? Stacey found the answer in Antarctic ice—and also beauty beyond belief. But that beauty was frozen in eternal crystal

A DARK patch appeared on the slope of a jagged ice ridge below. Rock—or the remains of a plane? Desperate hope surging through him, Stacey sent his own two-motored Lockheed Navy craft dipping down toward the tumbled and desolate Antarctic surface.

Fanged spires and pinnacles swelled upward threateningly. Between them lay snow, so deep and intensely white that it glittered blue. The ridges

dropped down and away in bleak, sharp terraces, leveling into deep valleys or tortured ice fields. Here and there were deep canyons and chasms, veiled in blue shadow. Mountains towered in the near distance, their outlines harsh against the gray sky.

The whole made a fantastic etching in white and blue and gray. Somehow the other tints only served to emphasize the predominating whiteness. And yet, despite this white backdrop, a dusk hung over the scene, deep and filled with mystery. Against the dusk, clouds of snow, torn up and driven by the fierce, bitterly cold wind, writhed and twisted like pain-crazed wraiths.

The dark patch spread and took on detail, and then Stacey saw that it wasn't a plane. Just rock after all. Hopelessness, a sudden, aching weight inside him, he lifted the P2V Neptune back to its former altitude.

With the craft flying on an even keel, he glanced at Tobin, erect and tense in the adjoining seat. The other's round, freckled features were questioning.

"What happened, Rick?" he asked, raising his voice over the roar of the motors.

"Thought it was Hansen and Matthews. No dice." Stacey looked steadily into the dusk, watching the mountains ahead creep nearer. His hawkish, spare face was somber. He had amber eyes, made all the more striking by his sun-browned skin and coppery hair. Combined with unusually wide shoulders and a lithe, tall figure, his appearance was so distinctive that he seldom failed to become a center of immediate interest wherever he went—much to his annoyance and disgust.

Tobin nodded and the stiffness went out of him. He followed the direction of Stacey's eyes for several seconds, then spoke again.

"Think we'll find them?"

"If we keep looking long enough," Stacey said.

"But we've been searching for almost a week already. After that time, there can't be any hope—not in a place as wild and cold as this." Tobin leaned closer, his blue gaze grimly earnest. "Rick, each day we've been flying farther away from base. We can't keep it up. Right now we're searching territory that no one has ever seen before—territory that hasn't been photographed or mapped. If anything happens to us—"

Tobin didn't finish, but it wasn't necessary for him to do so. Stacey understood. If anything happened, it was the end. One of the three expedition planes had crashed several weeks before, and with Hansen and Matthews lost and perhaps dead, there would be no other craft available to conduct a search. The radio at base would summon help, of course, but help couldn't possibly arrive in time.

Stacey pressed his lips together tightly, striving to shake off his gloomy frame of mind. It was no use. He had to admit that the whole expedition had been dogged by bad luck from the very beginning. It seemed inevitable that some of it should eventually attach to Tobin and himself. They had been immune too long.

Perhaps, Stacey thought, the whole mess was a result of man's attempt, as personified by the present expedition, to subdue the Antarctic and loot it of its ice-bound, age-old treasures. Uranium was the object in this case. A previous expedition had found traces of it, and with uranium now possessing high military importance, a second expedition had immediately been organized to determine just how extensive the deposits were. Stacey and Tobin, together with Hansen and Matthews and the two flyers who had previously

crashed, had been assigned to the expedition as an aerial photography and survey group.

IT HAD been hard work all the way.

But the engineers at base had seemed confident. They had insisted, Stacey remembered, that mining operations could easily be carried out despite the handicaps of snow and ice, sub-zero cold and terrific winds, and a terrain that was rough and frozen. They had talked of new mining machinery, and Stacey had seen their plans for an underground mining operations base, heated, insulated from the cold, and containing facilities for every convenience.

But now he wondered if man's science and machines were enough. The Antarctic was a savage and dangerous region, as unknown and alien as another planet. And it seemed inhabited by hostile, invisible things who bitterly resented human intrusion and fought it at every turn, fought with weapons of wind and snow, treacherous ice and deadly cold. Fought—and all too frequently won. Stacey thought darkly of Hansen and Matthews and of the two before them.

He narrowed his tawny gaze at the mountains ahead, sensing the vast, absolute silence that existed beyond the roar of the Lockheed's twin motors. It was the silence of a place undisturbed for countless years by anything but the wind. And the wind had carved the ice ridges beneath the speeding plane into palaces, mosques, pagodas, ships—endless bizarre shapes. The terrain was a fantastic fairyland, illumined by fairy tints of white and blue and green and gray. It was beautiful in its weird, frigidly still fashion—but behind that beauty, Stacey knew, lurked a dozen forms of death, some swift and violent, some slow and insidiously lingering.



Rick Stacey

The mountains were creeping nearer. If for some reason Hansen and Matthews had been unable to clear the peaks, Stacey thought, that was where he would find them—lying very quiet and frozen amid the ruins of their Lockheed somewhere along the base of the range. His guess seemed a good one. These were mountains of a height and sheer, rugged mass such as were to be found in only a few other parts of the world. Colossi, they were, spreading their enormous, blocky shoulders in silent menace against the gray and sullen sky. The wind was whipping long plumes of snow from the jagged peaks, plumes that were like congealed breaths issuing from beings huge and warm and balefully sentient.

Presently the massive summits were towering close. Stacey lifted the Lockheed, fighting the steady down pressure of the terrific wind outside. He wanted to clear the peaks with plenty to spare, otherwise a sudden blast of wind might smash them against one of those masses of steel-hard rock and knife-sharp ice.

Slowly the plane went over, swaying

and jerking in the wind's rush. Over and beyond and then down, one wing dipping dangerously. But the range had been passed, and now the steep slopes fell away sharply into a series of broad valleys far below.

Stacey guided the Lockheed down, following the slopes toward more level ground. He was jolted out of his preoccupation with flying at the hard pressure of Tobin's gloved hand on his arm. Tobin was pointing tensely.

"Down there, Rick! See it?"

After a moment, squinting intently, Stacey saw. About mid-way on one of the slopes to the right, something projected from the snow that seemed too dark and regular in shape to be ice. A wing, Stacey realized in another instant. He felt the old eagerness return, but subdued now, mingled with a feeling of dread and cold.

He swung the Lockheed around and toward the upthrust wing. Details appeared swiftly with decreasing distance. He saw the body of the wrecked plane, then, broken and crumpled. The other wing and the tail assembly were scattered dozens of yards away, barely visible in the deep drifts.

ONLY the cold and the dread, were left in Stacey now. He had been close in his guess regarding the fate of Hansen and Matthews. They had cleared the peaks, though. And it seemed that something had happened almost immediately afterward. Perhaps strong wind currents had driven the plane out of control. But the two had crashed there, on the slope.

Tobin had binoculars at his eyes and was studying the wreck intently. "No sign of life," he announced at last.

"Any tracks in the snow?" Stacey called back.

Tobin shook his head slowly. "They're still inside, Rick. This was

something they couldn't walk away from."

Stacey took a deep, unsteady breath. "Pictures, Phil."

Tobin unbuckled his safety straps and left his seat, moving carefully toward the large camera mounted over a hatch near the middle of the plane. He began snapping pictures as Stacey swung the Lockheed around again and came back over the wreck.

It was the least they could do, Stacey thought bitterly. There was no place to land, unless it was in one of the valleys far below. But that would have meant a long climb upward—too dangerous to risk. At that, however, Stacey felt willing to try it if he knew the two men were alive. But the wreck had been violent and complete, and nothing had disturbed the snow around it after the fragments had settled. There was no doubt but that Hansen and Matthews were dead.

Stacey swung the plane around once more, and then Tobin returned to his seat. Finally, lifting the Lockheed's nose, Stacey began climbing for altitude in preparation for returning over the peaks. The search was finished, he knew. He glanced for the last time at the wing protruding like a gravestone from the snow and lifted one gloved hand in a salute.

Ahead and up the peaks towered hard and sharp, long streamers of snow stretching away from them in the fierce wind. The plane climbed steadily, its motors thrumming.

Stacey thought eagerly of base. It would be good to be back to where there was life and warmth and the security that came of solid contact with the ground. He would appreciate these things more than ever now. He knew he would never forget the picture of the wing high on a lonely mountain slope. He—

The right motor missed a beat.

Stacey's hands froze on the controls. Ice seemed to form along his back, creeping up into his mind. He glanced at Tobin and saw in the other's eyes the same alarm that must have been mirrored in his own.

The motor had picked up once more. Now it missed again. Then it coughed—and died.

Stacey darted a look at the instruments. They showed that plenty of gas and oil remained for the return to base. There was only one other explanation for the dead motor.

"Ice in the fuel lines," he told Tobin. "Something must have gone wrong with the water screen on the refuel hose back at base."

"What can we do?" Tobin demanded anxiously, his freckles strangely dark against his skin.

"We'll have to land somewhere. The fuel lines have to be cleared. We couldn't get over the mountains on one motor."

Tobin glanced downward as Stacey began fighting the list and drag of the dead motor. "There might be level ground in one of the valleys down there, Rick. Think you can make it?"

STACEY nodded briefly, his hawkish features set in grim lines. The Lockheed was slipping toward the right at an angle, and only his skilled manipulations of the controls kept the craft from going into a spin. He let the nose continue to drop, lifting the right wing at just the proper moment. Aided by the remaining motor, the plane went into a long glide downward. Past the mountain slopes, it soared, approaching the nearest of the broad valleys below, which began to open up like the interior of some enormous flower.

And then the left motor began missing. Seconds later, it, too, went dead.



Verla of Olin

In the abrupt silence, Stacey could feel his heart pumping loudly. He fought to stretch the plane's downward glide toward the valley, knowing with a frantic clarity that his and Tobin's only hope now rested on reaching level ground.

An eternity seemed to inch past. Wind keened past the plane, and the ice terraces and snow slopes dropped past with blurred swiftness. Then the mouth of the valley swallowed the Lockheed, and only short hundreds of yards ahead the slope at last leveled off.

Stacey battled to keep the plane's nose up the remaining distance. If they hit the tumbled drifts at the foot of the slope, serious damage to the Lockheed was certain to result. Another plane wing would point its grim message at the sky. But this time, Stacey thought, it would mark the frozen graves of Lieutenant Rickard Stacey and Lieutenant (j.g.) Philip Tobin.

With only a few feet to spare, the plane cleared the drifts, and then its runners were gliding over the smooth expanse of snow beyond. A short time

later the braking flaps brought the Lockheed safely to a stop.

Stacey relaxed in his seat with a long sigh of relief. "Well, here we are!" he announced finally.

Tobin grunted. "A couple of hundred miles from nowhere in particular. Anyway, we're still in one piece. And clearing the fuel lines shouldn't be too much of a job."

Unbuckling his safety straps, Stacey leaned toward the windshield, peering into the greater confines of the valley ahead. The valley was roughly triangular in shape and several miles in extent, with the plane situated at what seemed the apex. Mountains loomed bleakly on every side, and the mysterious Antarctic dusk seemed thicker here. There was a deep, unearthly silence, broken only by the low moaning of the wind.

Scattered over the valley floor were a great number of curious ice formations, cone-like in shape, tapering toward the top. Stacey had noticed them in a preoccupied way while landing, but now something about the formations struck him as strange. They seemed too numerous and too identical in outline to be natural.

"Hand me the glasses," he told Tobin.

With the binoculars focussed on the formations, Stacey made two discoveries, one within instants of the other. Startled, incredulous, he whirled back to Tobin.

"Good Lord, Phil! There are people inside those overgrown icicles, or whatever the things are!"

"People!" Tobin gasped. "Have you gone nuts?"

"People," Stacey repeated. "And beyond the icicles are the tops of buildings. Here, take a look."

Long seconds later, Tobin took the binoculars from his eyes. His round,

freckled features looked dazed.

"You . . . you're right, Rick! Those icicles have people in them. And . . . and there's a city—or what's left of a city—in the distance!"

"We've stumbled over something," Stacey muttered. "And I'm going to find out just what it is!"

CHAPTER II

THEIR preparations were few and quickly completed. Both wore thick, warmly lined leather flying suits, and over these, for additional protection against the cold, they pulled hooded fur parkas, which they took from their supply of emergency equipment. There were canvas packs with shoulder slings, containing food and cooking utensils, together with such items as a compass, signal flares, a Colt .45 automatic, and ammunition. They slipped the weapons, which were already loaded, into convenient pockets beneath their fur parkas. Then, carrying snowshoes and long staffs tipped with steel grapnels, they left the plane.

Donning the snowshoes, they set out across the valley floor toward the nearest of the strange pillar-like formations. They had been trained in the use of snowshoes, as well as other Antarctic equipment, and they made swift progress.

Stacey was excited and tense. People—here, in the Antarctic! It seemed too fantastic to be an actuality. But he had seen the figures within the ice pillars, their forms undeniably human. And Tobin had seen them also.

Were they alive? Stacey glanced toward the towers of what seemed a city far in the distance, towers which, to the unaided eye, looked like continuations of the pillars scattered over the valley. He decided against the question. With a city relatively close

at hand, there seemed no logical reason why the people in the pillars should endure such imprisonment out in the open. Most likely, Stacey decided, the pillars were graves of some weird sort.

The idea seemed confirmed when he and Tobin at last stood before one of the pillars. Within was a girl, exotically lovely, her slender form unclothed and very still. Her eyes were closed as though in sleep, but it did not seem to be a peaceful one, for an expression of despair was frozen on her small, delicate face.

Then Stacey discovered something that was even more disturbing. He found that the girl's hands were bound by chains to a smaller pillar inside the outer one. Death, it appeared, had not come naturally to this girl.

He found also that the pillar did not consist of ice, as he had earlier surmised. It was transparent, with a yellowish tint, like plastic or hard wax.

Tobin's round face was awed and perplexed. He turned to Stacey and spoke in a hushed voice.

"This doesn't make sense, Rick! This girl is chained in there. Have you noticed it?"

Stacey nodded. "Something happened to her that couldn't have been very nice."

"Wonder if she's dead," Tobin went on. "Doesn't seem likely, if she has to be kept chained down."

"That might have been necessary—before she died," Stacey said slowly. He glanced around, feeling the strangeness of the scene and the utter silence that hung over it creep into him with a chill that was not due entirely to the bitter cold. He made a sudden gesture to Tobin and strode toward another pillar a short distance away.

WITHIN the pillar was a man, tall and splendidly proportioned. His



Phil Tobin

features, though essentially masculine, had the same exotic quality as that of the girl. It was a quality for which Stacey could find no resemblance in any race he knew. The man's figure, like that of the girl, was unclothed, but his eyes were open. They were distended in a stare of horror and fear, as though he had died with his gaze fastened upon something unutterly loathsome. And his hands, too, were chained.

"Wish I knew how long they've been like that," Tobin mused as he and Stacey turned away.

"Not very long," Stacey decided. "Otherwise they would have been covered over with snow."

Tobin was silent for some seconds, gazing at the towers of the city in the dim distance. "If you're right, Rick, that means people are still living here. Right here—in the heart of the Antarctic!"

"Not very pleasant people," Stacey muttered, his face grim. "I have an idea that we'd better watch our steps, Phil."

They were in the midst of the pillars now. They stopped before each, gazing silently at the figures within. The people seemed to consist of men and women in equal numbers, and not all were young or unclothed. But they shared in common a dread and fright that had left its indelible stamp upon their faces.

And then Stacey came to a pillar before which he halted with startled abruptness; awe and admiration sweeping the chill unease from his mind. Chained inside the pillar, frozen and statuesque as were all the others, was a girl—but a girl of a kind Stacey had not seen in the pillars before. There was somehow a difference in everything about her, intangible, yet unmistakable, as though she were of higher degree than the eerily immobile figures all around. The conviction seemed borne out by the fact that her pillar was set apart from the others and raised upon a dias of ice.

"A princess," Stacey whispered. "You could only have been a princess. Or a queen. . . ."

The girl was young and slim, but exquisitely rounded, her bare form gleaming with a pearl-like luster in the dusk. Dark hair fell in shining, heavy waves well below her waist. Her delicate features were perfectly moulded—and they were composed, as though some fine, proud spirit within her had resisted showing any trace of fear. Her eyes were closed, the dark lashes long and soft on the swelling contours of her cheeks.

She was beautiful in a way Stacey could not recall ever having seen, yet it was something more than this that had so instantly attracted him. It was as though an ideal of womanhood, for which he had searched long and futilely, had finally materialized—and this even more wondrous than he had been able to imagine.

He had a sudden, deep sense of

tragedy. Unconsciously, without knowing that she existed, he had yearned for this girl all his life. And now he had found her—but too late. Something that ended the brightness and the sweetness of her, leaving her still and cold, transfixed within a pillar of some unknown substance which had been deposited about her in some unimaginable way.

Stacey knew he would never be the same again for having seen this girl. And rebellion rose within him at the thought that her loss should be irrevocable. With something of desperation, he speculated once more on the possibility of people existing in the city beyond. If people were actually there, alive somehow, they might know how to awaken and release the girl.

Grim determination formed within Stacey. If people still lived in the city, he would find them. And he would force them—

Stacey's thoughts were interrupted by an explosive gasp. He whirled to find Tobin pointing in unbelieving horror at an object which was coming toward them. In the next instant Stacey became rigid with shock, his mind revolting in stark incredulity at what he saw.

For approaching over the snow came a huge head—floating in the air without any visible means of propulsion or support, yet moving with uncanny speed!

COMpletely bodiless, the head was—and huge, all of five feet in height. The features were unmistakably feminine, beautiful in a way that was strange and alien—but that beauty was evil, sadistic and cruel. The great red lips were stretched in a rapacious leer over large, sharp teeth, and baleful fires flickered within the red-tinted, slit-pupilled eyes. Covering the head like

hair was . . . sheer horror, living ropes of flesh, writhing snake-like about the vast face, each strand scaled and dappled like the skin of a python, shining, at once beautiful and terrible.

The weird monstrosity suddenly brought to Stacey a recollection of pictures he had seen of the Gorgon of myth, whose glance was capable of turning men into stone. And somehow the objectivity of the thought enabled him to wrench his mind free of the paralyzing dread that the apparition had struck into him. He darted a hand into the opening of his parka, fumbling for his Colt .45.

"Go for your gun, Phil!" he hissed at his stunned companion. "Get ready to start shooting!"

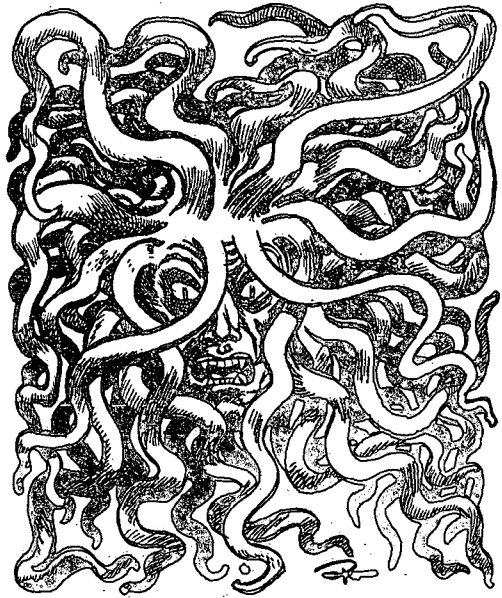
As though sensing his intention, the head abruptly slowed. The scarlet, flaming eyes narrowed—and Stacey felt something like an icy hand grasp fiercely within his mind, seeking, probing, then holding him motionless with an overpowering mental force.

A complete paralysis came over him. Only his thoughts seemed able to move, whirling in panic and despair.

Within him was a suspicion that verged on horrible certainty. Was it possible that the Gorgon was no creature of myth after all—that this was one of its descendants? Or—incredibly—was it possible that this was the original Gorgon, having somehow existed through the centuries in this valley, deep in the heart of Antarctica?

He did not know. He was aware only that the nightmarish monster had rendered him a helpless victim for whatever evil plans it had in mind.

Once more the head began moving toward them, moving with stealthy care this time, as though having realized that the two men were strangers. The red-tinted eyes were still narrowed, intent, and wary, the scarlet lips curved in a



The Gorgon

soundless snarl. Closer, closer, the head drifted. It finally floated to a stop a few yards away—and the nearness of it sent waves of revulsion through Stacey, so intense that they bordered on pain.

Now the reddish, slit-pupilled eyes slowly widened, became fixed and unblinking, glittering with hypnotic steadiness. Stacey felt the icy hand stir within his mind, moving with sinister purpose. Dimly he realized what was happening. The monster's chill, powerful thoughts were probing and searching his memory centers—draining him of knowledge!

A long time seemed to pass. Stacey felt as though he floated, disembodied, in a murky void, while cold fingers plucked and prodded at his awareness. Then, slowly, he became conscious of his surroundings once more. He saw the head close before him, and even as he realized this and strove shudderingly and futilely to move away, one of the living ropes of flesh covering the head darted at him with the speed of a strik-

ing serpent. He felt a sharp pain in his thigh.

Flames seemed to spread through him from the point of contact, like ripples spreading over the surface of water. The flames touched his mind—and it was as though a great light blazed briefly within him, bringing a new clarity and vividness of being, a sharpening and heightening of perceptions that seemed to open up a whole new world of awareness. He grew conscious of things he had never noticed before, of outlines and details, of shades and tones strange to him. He knew that his mind was involved, for his brain seemed to have become painfully tender and sensitive, as though each nerve had been stripped of insulation—laid bare to the cold, probing mental fingers of the nightmarish creature into whose power he had fallen.

HIS new senses told him that what had happened to him was happening to Tobin also. And he realized that the same fate had overtaken the splendid race of people now imprisoned within the pillars.

A mocking chuckle sounded in Stacey's mind. And then came a mental voice, soft and insidiously sweet, with an undertone that was chillingly alien.

"You are correct, human. What you see about you is the handiwork of Gorgon. As for those other details, which yet puzzle you, soon you will learn—very soon."

The chuckle came again. It faded slowly, submerging beneath a current of dark purpose. He sent out a tentative finger of thought in an attempt to learn what that purpose was, but he obtained nothing save a curious impression of *strain*, as though the head—or Gorgon as the unearthly being called itself—were concentrating intently upon the performance of some difficult

task. Though tense and apprehensive, a part of Stacey reacted with a shock to the fact that the head's name should be exactly identical to that of the mythical creature of which he had been thinking a short time before. He wondered in a dim way what the actual relationship was.

Then everything was crowded from his mind by the awareness of what now began to take place. The huge head, grotesque and repulsive, yet oddly beautiful, had moved close to Tobin, poising itself before him. From the tips of the snake-like strands coiling like hair about the strangely woman-like face a whitish mist began to flow, settling and thickening about Tobin's rigid form.

Stacey recognized the manifestation as similar to that by which a spider spins a web, or a moth a cocoon, but on a vastly greater scale. And not unlike a huge spider, the Gorgon began weaving and bobbing about Tobin, shaping the soft and plastic substance with its tentacular growth, which seemed as deft and swift as fingers.

Behind Tobin a small pillar took shape. Chains appeared, securing his wrists to the pillar. Then, completely enclosing Tobin and the small pillar, a large one quickly formed. When the Gorgon at last ceased its rapid movements, Tobin was encased like a fly in amber, immobile, statuesque—an exact replica of the weirdly imprisoned people scattered over the valley floor.

With the uncanny depth of perception that had come to him, Stacey sensed Tobin's thoughts. The other was sick with despair, and the effect upon Stacey was all the more intense for the knowledge that, within moments, he would share a similar fate. It couldn't happen, he told himself. It mustn't happen! But even as the desperate thoughts flashed through his

mind, he knew there was nothing he could do. He was paralyzed, helpless, unable to move so much as an eyelid. He had to admit that he was . . . doomed.

The Gorgon turned toward Stacey, the great slit-pupilled, reddish eyes lit with a deep exultation at his horror before the knowledge of what it intended doing to him. The cold mental fingers explored his mind again, feeling out each nuance of his dread—sucking at his emotions as a spider might suck at his juices, with a relish and a tasting and an inner satisfaction as at feeding well.

"You have seen the Gorgon's handiwork, human," the mocking thought formed in his brain. "Now you understand—now you know what awaits you."

There was a soft chuckle. The monster slowly moved closer to Stacey, its reddish orbs enrapt, gloating. From the tips of the snake-like appendages about its face, the whitish mist once more began to issue, settling and thickening around him. The stuff felt warm, yet no more substantial than smoke. But as the creature began weaving and bobbing about him, swiftly shaping his prison, the mist began rapidly to grow dense and solid. Within a short time it was as firm as a coating of plastic or ice.

THE Gorgon was finished. It hovered before Stacey, gazing into his unblinking eyes with a vast delight, preening its dark thoughts before the mirror of his mind.

"Human, you and your companion are now in the Gorgon's power. And the Gorgon is pleased, for you are both young and strong. For such as you, the Gorgon has a need."

"A need?" Stacey's thoughts echoed automatically. "What do you mean



Zarduc

by that?"

"The Gorgon is building a bridge. What you see here"—and the monster's thoughts gestured like a hand at the pillars dotting the valley—"are links in that bridge. When the last link is in place, *all* of the Gorgon will enter your world."

"All?" Stacey echoed again, his interest rising above the sick dejection that filled him.

"What you see of me here is not my complete self. The rest of what might be called my body exists in another world—dimension is the exact term, I believe. . . . You wonder, human, regarding my true appearance? Then I shall show you."

Slowly a picture formed in Stacey's mind. As it took on shape and detail, he was filled with incredulity and bewilderment, made all the more intense by a growing horror.

For the Gorgon was strange and alien almost beyond comprehension. The creature, it seemed, consisted of a number of separate bodies or members, each

a distinct entity and able to function independently of the whole. The parts were made one by a psychic and physiological connection so complex and deep-reaching that Stacey was able to grasp only the vaguest implications of it. His mind could not embrace the full extent of that weird being. He was unable to accept what he did understand of the creature's size, its intricacy of detail and function, and its sheer, superhuman abilities.

But he did know that he had been rendered helpless and made a prisoner by the uncanny powers of that portion of the Gorgon existing here. And he knew that those powers would be increased incalculably if the creature were able to assume its complete aspect. Nothing could prevail against it. If the Gorgon finished building its bridge—if all of it came through into the world of men—no greater catastrophe to human civilization could possibly result.

"There is nothing to prevent me from coming through," the monster's jeering thought broke in. "My work is almost done. Soon your world will be my domain, to do with as I please. And I have many interesting ideas about that, you can be sure!"

And Stacey saw what that would be. The jeering thoughts sketched a picture whose details were made all the more horrible by a fierce eagerness, a ravening hunger and sadistic cruelty. The Gorgon considered human beings as little better than cattle. And as cattle they would be . . . fed upon. The world would become a vast ranch, a wild and barbaric place in which people would be bred and herded. There was also a suggestion of tortures and practices which made Stacey sick with loathing and dread.

As though his emotions excited the monster, its cold fingers of thought be-

gan stabbing at the tender, over-sensitive perceptions that his new awareness had given him. Great waves of pain beat through him repeatedly, crowding his agonized mind perilously close to the brink of madness. And yet, somehow, he knew that his suffering gave the head enormous pleasure and stimulation, as though his torment were a source of influences more potent than liquor or drugs.

Stacey did not lose consciousness. In his new state of being that seemed impossible to do. Yet his reactions to pain reached a saturation point which for the time being rendered him useless for the Gorgon's purposes. Still palpably excited, the creature darted over to Tobin's pillar, and Stacey's dimmed and pain-hazed perceptions told him that his companion was now enduring a like experience.

The Gorgon's excitement reached a state bordering on insane frenzy. Abandoning Tobin at last, it went to the pillar within which was the lovely girl who had so strongly attracted Stacey at his very first sight of her. The creature's thoughts jabbed and slashed at the mind of the girl, but Stacey sensed a dissatisfaction with the result, as though the girl were steeling herself against the pain. Furious, but reluctant to postpone its sport the length of time necessary to beat down the girl's barriers, the head rushed away toward the other pillars further beyond. It paused before each, whipping sensitive perceptions into maddening agony, until a cloud of suffering seemed to hang over the entire valley.

Sick, filled with infinite despair, Stacey thought of the Gorgon loose and rampant upon the world—thought of it tormenting the entire human race as it was now tormenting the helpless prisoners within their pillars here in the valley.

CHAPTER III

STACEY'S awareness of the Gorgon's presence gradually faded. It seemed that the monster had finally wearied of its sadistic activities and left the valley.

A calm descended that had in it something almost of peace. Then a voice spoke in Stacey's mind. With the strange, all-embracing awareness that had come to him, he recognized the mental tones as those of Tobin.

"Rick?" Tobin was saying. "Rick? Can you hear me?"

"I've got you on the beam, Phil. Over."

"Rick—that thing . . . what it was thinking . . . what it plans to do . . ." Tobin's thought were incoherent with a deep horror that was not for himself.

"I know what you mean," Stacey said slowly. "It would be the rottenest thing that could possibly happen to the world."

Tobin was silent a moment. He seemed to be getting himself in control. Finally he said:

"We can't let that thing get loose, Rick! We've got to stop it before it's too late. The world has to be warned."

"I've been thinking about that," Stacey returned grimly. "I haven't been able to think about anything else. But I don't know how we're going to get out of these icicles we're in."

"We've got to find a way, Rick! We've just got to!"

Stacey said nothing. He kept his gloomy thoughts masked.

"Rick?" Tobin asked after a moment.

"Still here."

"How are we able to talk to each other like this?"

"I think the head did something to us . . . to our minds. Remember the way she stung us with those snakes on her head? Somehow, the sting made



Koryl

us telepathic."

A warm thought brushed Stacey's mind softly. "You are correct, stranger."

Stacey felt a queer thrill. He knew the soundless words came from the lovely girl in the pillar nearby, who had so deeply fascinated him. He had been aware for some time that she was not dead, as he had at first guessed, but held in paralysis—or suspended animation?—as were Tobin and himself. But only now his full attention settle upon her.

"Thank you," he said. "I was just guessing, but it's nice to have you support me."

The warm thought seemed to smile this time. "I am pleased to accept your thanks. You see, stranger, there are great powers slumbering in the human mind. The telepathic ability is one of them. The Gorgon is able to awaken this ability by means of her sting, which paralyzes those portions of the brain whose functions ordinarily block it. But enough of the Gorgon. We shall

have more than enough time in which to speak of her later. Who are you, stranger? From whence do you come? There are vague pictures in your mind which greatly interest Verla of Olin."

Stacey introduced himself, not omitting to include Tobin also. Then, with the flashingly swift mental speech that was so much more rapid than spoken words, he described the United States, its people and civilization. He sketched a picture of the other nations of the world in the attempt to give the girl the perspective necessary to appreciate the finer points of his own homeland. Finally he told her of the expedition to the Antarctic, and of his and Tobin's search for the missing flyers, which had resulted in their discovery of the valley and their capture by the Gorgon.

The warm thoughts of the girl were touched with awe. "It is wonderful, Rick Stacey, the picture of the outside-world which you have given me. It... why, it seems more like a beautiful story than reality! But I do not doubt that what you have told me is real. There is truth in your thoughts—and kindness. More, Rick Stacey, there is a wisdom in your mind such as few men in Olin possess, and these learned scholars of the ancient knowledge."

STACEY gave a mental shrug to conceal emotions in which pleasure and embarrassment were mingled. He asked, "Is Olin the name for your land?"

"It is now more precisely the name for the city alone, for only there does life still exist. But once it was the name for the city and the surrounding valleys. That was in the long ago, when, as legends say, Olin was a warm land, a land of grass and trees and flowers."

She paused a moment, sadness tinging her thoughts, and Stacey recalled a scientist back at base having mentioned that Antarctica was once a tropical

paradise. Then the girl continued her explanations. There were not many people left in the city, it seemed, only a few thousand at the most. Existence had grown more difficult through the centuries, and only the fittest had survived. The ancient machines that warmed the city and produced food and clothes and the other necessities of life, had broken down one by one. The machines were vast and complex. The descendants of the men who had built them had not known how to keep them in repair.

Stacey was interested in the machines. "Do you know how they function?" he asked. "How do they produce food and clothes? The people of my land do not have such machines."

Verla was unable to answer in detail. But what she did communicate to Stacey startled him. The ancients of Olin had possessed atomic power! And it was through atomic transmutation that the wonderful old machines which remained produced clothing and food. Taking as raw material stone, metal, wood, and earth—even such unsubstantial stuff as air itself—the machines turned out edible things, bolts of cloth, bars and sheets of metal, not to overlook a steady output of light and heat. The atomic motors would function as long as the metal ingeniously fashioned about them endured. But the grinding pressure of centuries had slowly weakened the metal bodies of the machines, and their atomic hearts had stopped one by one.

"You seem surprised by the power which the ancients of Olin were able to harness in the machine," Verla told Stacey. "Do not the men of your land have such power?"

"In a very crude form," Stacey said. "They have just learned to release it in the form of weapons called bombs, though now they are experimenting

with atomic fires called piles, which they hope to harness to machinery which will produce light and heat. Transmutation has already been accomplished on a small scale. To the people of my land, these things are remarkable, for ours is still a young civilization. But since you have had these things for a very long time, it seems that is not so with your people."

"We are an old race," Verla said. "Olin was great long before the coming of the ice."

The great age of the city, her soft mental voice went on after a moment, was shown by the vast depth of ice which now covered it. Only tall towers were still visible. This portion of the city above the ice was known as Upper Olin. The portion below was called Lower Olin.

And Lower Olin, she explained, was enormous in extent, for the city had been very large. Far beneath the ice were innumerable tunnels and corridors, connecting the great buried buildings. But as might have been expected, only a very tiny portion of Lower Olin was inhabited. The people here were very different in character from those who lived in Upper Olin. They were a good and industrious people. Conscious of their ancient glories, they were struggling to attain once more what the indolence of their predecessors had lost.

"The people of Lower Olin," Verla's thoughts finished proudly, "are my people."

And for the first time the full significance of the title Verla of Olin dawned upon Stacey. She was a princess, the hereditary ruler of Olin. He recalled having sensed her importance at his first sight of her in the pillar. Now he knew he hadn't been wrong in calling her a princess, though the term then had been one of admiration more than

anything else.

"But what of those in Upper Olin?" he asked. "Aren't they your people also?"

INSTANT scorn filled the girl's response. "They are not my people, Rick Stacey! Else I and these others, including you and your friend, would not be here. The people of Upper Olin are rebels against the ancient line—outlaws and heartless murderers. Worse, they are the creatures and willing tools of the Gorgon!"

"Do you mean that the monster has human allies?" Stacey demanded in astonishment.

"Yes—and the most clever and dangerous of these is Koryl, her high priestess. For in Upper Olin, you see, the Gorgon is worshipped as a goddess. Thus far have fallen the descendants of the ancient great of Olin!"

"Koryl is beautiful—willingly I admit this. Her beauty has driven men mad. Yet few will deny that she is also scheming and cruel. And just as cruel, though without her cleverness, is Zarduc, the chief of her warriors. Koryl serves the Gorgon, but Zarduc serves Koryl."

"I think I can understand Zarduc's side of the situation," Stacey said musingly. "But I don't see why Koryl should help the Gorgon—or for that matter why the Gorgon should help Koryl."

"It is because Koryl alone understands the secret and mysterious process by which is kept open the gateway between the Gorgon's world and this one. That, perhaps, is why the Gorgon does not tamper mentally with Koryl, fearing that the gateway will instantly close. And that is evidently why the Gorgon has imprisoned us within these pillars, planning to use our combined minds or life energies in some fashion

that will overcome Koryl's advantage."

"I wonder if Koryl knows that."

Verla's answering thought was faintly startled. "Perhaps not—though she is clever, as I have said. And ambitious. Koryl is using the Gorgon's help to achieve great personal power. Already Koryl is in possession of all Upper Olin. And almost daily Zarduc and the Gorgon make deeper raids into Lower Olin. It was on one such raid that I was captured. That was not long ago—a few weeks, according to your measurement of time."

"And Koryl allowed the Gorgon to place you here?" Stacey said.

"Yes. Koryl has hated me most of all my line. I think she would have killed me, except that subjecting me to perpetual torment as a prisoner of the Gorgon offered greater satisfaction."

"But if you were captured, how is it that your people in Lower Olin still remain?"

"I ventured too far from the hidden places while leading a small band in quest of ancient machines which could be used by us as weapons against Koryl," Verla explained. "As I have told you, Lower Olin is vast in extent. My people are difficult to locate. But frequently small groups leave to seek machines or supplies. It is then that they risk capture by the Gorgon or Zarduc."

"They have real courage," Stacey said in quick admiration. "And they're the only hope we have for regaining our freedom. Do you think they might make an attempt to rescue us, Verla?"

"There is an excellent chance that they might. That is why I have not despaired too much at being imprisoned. Jendon, one of the wisest of the scholars in Lower Olin, has an idea for overcoming the Gorgon's superhuman powers. He was working upon it the last time I saw him."

"The Gorgon!" Stacey's thought was

filled with anger and disgust. "Everything seems to center around the Gorgon. Has the thing always been in Olin?"

"Not always." Verla began an explanation, the silent words flashing in complete images and ideas across the screen of her mind.

In the distant past, a scientist of Olin had accidentally discovered how to open up the gateway between Earth and the other-dimension world of the Gorgon. But it was an incomplete gateway, such that only the Gorgon's head could come through. Because of the strong psychic and physiological link between the head and other bodily parts, the Gorgon's sphere of activity was kept confined to Olin, as the city and its enclosing valley were nearest the gateway. Thus the monster could not become an immediate threat to the world until it managed to bring the rest of its incomprehensibly alien body through.

THIS scientist who first opened the gateway, was an ancestor of Koryl. Like Koryl, he, too, hungered for personal power and used the Gorgon's uncanny abilities to achieve his aims, the most immediate of which was the overthrow of the rulers of Olin. He succeeded in this end, though shortly afterward another scientist fathomed the secret of the gateway and closed it. Separated from its other bodily parts, the psychic and physiological link severed, the head almost immediately died. And, deprived of his alien ally, Koryl's ancestor soon met a like fate.

"The story has become a legend," Verla told Stacey. "Perhaps the people of your land know of it, for at that time the cold was settling over Olin and many were leaving for warmer lands. They would have spread the story, so that it became a legend beyond Olin

also."

"Evidently they did," Stacey agreed. "I have read of such a legend, though it seems to have been considerably changed by time and much repeating." He outlined briefly the ancient Grecian myth of Perseus and the Gorgon, Medusa.

Verla resumed her explanation. The scientist who had overcome the Gorgon in the distant past, she said, was one of her direct ancestors. This was the principle reason for Koryl's intense hatred of her. Made immensely popular by his feat, the scientist became a ruler of Olin. He did much to keep alive Olin's declining greatness, a task made increasingly difficult for his descendants by the cold and the ice, which began to grow ever more serious.

Olin went into a swift decline. It was not until the past few hundred years that its inhabitants began to shake off the fetters of superstition and barbarism, and in doing so begin the long climb upward. In Verla's time, great progress had already been made in knowledge regarding the ancient machines and records. There had been a promise of even greater things to come.

"And then," Verla said bitterly, "Koryl discovered long-hidden instructions for opening the gateway, which had been left by her ancestor scientist. She allowed another Gorgon to enter this world, allying herself with the monster as her traitorous forebear had done in the past.

"War immediately followed. For myself and the subjects loyal to me, it was a losing war. We were forced to flee Upper Olin and take refuge in the lowest levels of the city, where we have been at bay ever since.

"Now Koryl considers herself the mistress of all Olin, and life in her part of the city, I have heard, is an unending celebration of her victory. There

is feasting, drinking, and the wildest kind of revelry. Almost each day there are dances and contests of some sort. Slaves are pitted against each other in bloody sports, forced to kill under the threat of horrible torture. And there are ceremonies centering about the worship of the Gorgon, in which slaves or captives are offered as sacrifices to the monster."

"What a mess!" Stacey's entire being was appalled and sickened. "And the same thing is going to happen to the lands beyond Olin unless we can somehow prevent it. If all of the Gorgon gets through the gateway, the thing will be too powerful for even the advanced science of my own people to stop."

"If it comes through," Verla returned bleakly, "there will not be one Gorgon, Rick Stacey. Others will follow. It is only because the Gorgon is as yet unable to enter entirely that more of its kind have not appeared. I do not understand the exact reason, but it is as though the Gorgon were blocking the gateway."

"More!" Stacey gasped. "As if one weren't enough as it is!" His thoughts collapsed hopelessly, and he remained sunk in a gloomy mental silence.

AFTER a time Verla's thoughts touched him like a gentle and comforting hand. He found himself communicating with her again, telling her, in response to her questions, of the kind of clothing and ornaments in fashion among the women of his land; and explaining the customs that existed between the sexes there. It was not until later that he realized how cleverly she had made him forget his despond.

He had a sense of growing intimacy that was very pleasant. In the direct contact of mind to mind, there was little one could hide from the other. Any attempt at concealment was instantly



The crystal globe floated gently toward the spires of the amazing city

detectable. Thus, despite the short time he had been acquainted with her, Stacey came to know more of Verla of Olin than he would normally have learned in years of another girl. And what he learned was in every way sweet and fine, completely in keeping with what his eyes had told him of her exceptional loveliness. He was certain now that this girl was his ideal, yet with a shyness he had not hitherto known he pos-

sessed, he sought to keep his feelings hidden.

He felt guilty until he discovered that Verla was hiding something, too. And in the end their very efforts gave them both away.

Verla's secret, Stacey found, was astonishingly and delightfully like his own.

Hand in mental hand, then, they wandered the enchanting pathways that

existed for them alone. Until Verla's thoughts flared in sudden alarm.

"Rick—someone approaches!"

And as though her dread were a ripple widening in a pool of water, a mental echo of it rose from the pillar-folk.

"It is the Gorgon! And with her—Koryll!"

Instinctively, Stacey knew what that meant. And Verla evidently knew also.

"Koryl has learned of you, Rick. She comes to see what manner of men are

you and Phil Tobin. Rick . . . I'm afraid!"

Trying futilely to comfort the girl, Stacey waited. And then, into his limited view soared a strange bubble-shaped craft, within which sat a group of people in brightly-colored garments.

In front of the machine floated the Gorgon.

CHAPTER IV

BEFORE the pillars containing Stacey and Tobin the monster hovered to a stop. A moment later the bubble craft stopped, too, settling lightly to the snow. A door opened in the



transparent side, and one by one its passengers emerged.

A man and a woman preceded the others. There was that about their appearance and bearing which almost at once enabled Stacey to identify them as Koryl and Zarduc. An instant later a whisper of thought from Verla confirmed his guess.

After the pair came several girls and men. They were of varying ages and almost without exception were fine physical specimens. They were light in coloring, as were all the people of Olin Stacey had so far seen. He would have classed them as unusually attractive were it not for the effects of dissipation clearly visible in their faces. The boisterous, wild life of Upper Olin was leaving its mark.

All wore short skirts of some metallic material, glittering and multi-colored, with ornate and richly jewelled harnesses covering the upper half of their bodies. On their feet were jewel-embossed buskins that laced to the knee. Both men and girls wore elaborate head coverings, the girls tall, fantastically arabesqued tiaras, the men lavishly decorated helmets, surmounted by colored plumes or high, scroll-like crests.

At first Stacey wondered why they did not suffer from the cold. Then he saw that all were covered with a thin, transparent over-garment that somehow provided effective insulation.

Stacey could not read their thoughts, something that seemed to be possible only to those within the pillars. But it was obvious that most of the group were enjoying a lark. They were laughing and talking excitedly, jostling each other in their eagerness to peer at Stacey and Tobin.

After his initial, comprehensive scrutiny of the others, Stacey devoted his attention to Koryl and Zarduc—particularly to Koryl, for despite what he

knew of her character, the high priestess fascinated him.

Verla had told him that Koryl was beautiful, that men had killed themselves over her. But with a picture of evil in his mind, the description had meant little. Now he saw that Koryl's beauty was incredible—outrageous.

Her body, revealed by her brief costume, was perfection itself, as though she were a poem in flesh modeled by some master sculptor whose talents were infinitely above the human—god-like. She was as slim as the golden flame burning in an utter absence of wind, yet somehow lushly rounded and curved. Her skin was white and utterly flawless, with a faint rose tint. From under the tall, crown-shaped tiara atop her small head fell a mass of curling blonde hair, as long and heavy as a short cloak and the color of molten gold. Her face was slightly triangular, the chin dimpled and the lips full and sensuous, the color of a strong man's blood freshly spilled upon snow. There was passion in those lips, Stacey thought—and cruelty.

He found himself looking into her eyes with a sensation as though he were sinking into endless depths. A clear aquamarine green, those eyes, large and tilted and fringed heavily with golden brown lashes. He wrenched himself from their fathomless, sea-like embrace with an effort, turning his awareness, as though in search of escape, upon Zarduc.

THE man was tall and superbly muscled, with aquiline features that were too harsh and self-centered in cast to be entirely handsome. From beneath his ornate helmet dark red hair curled almost to his shoulders. His skin was almost as fair as that of the girls about him, though numerous scars, evidently relics of past battles, covered his splen-

did warrior's body. His eyes were a pale and icy blue, narrowed now in a slight frown as he gazed at Stacey. A scowl twisted his too-full lips.

Stacey realized that he had awakened hostility in the other. He was at a loss to understand the reason, for he was unable either by sound or expression to do anything which could arouse the chieftain's dislike. A moment later, directing his awareness once more at Koryl, the answer became plain.

Other emotions had replaced the purely objective interest which had first shown on her face. Her green eyes were lidded and slumbrous as they traveled over Stacey's features, noting his sun-bronzed skin, touching the firm line of his lips and the spread of his shoulders, evident even beneath his fur parka. Her slow, appraising glance returned to his coppery hair and lingered on his amber eyes. The sensuous curve of her lips deepened in a faint smile.

Zarduc turned to her and spoke abruptly, motioning toward the bubble-shaped craft. Koryl shook herself slightly, as though awakening from a dream. A mask seemed to slide over her features. She spoke briefly to Zarduc—obviously in refusal, for the man's scowl deepened.

He began to argue now, his gestures swift and angry. But with an imperiously silencing wave of one slim, white hand, Koryl turned away.

Zarduc flushed and bit his lip. He was plainly furious, but it seemed that he did not dare protest any further against whatever Koryl had in mind.

The warrior chief feared Koryl, Stacey realized—feared her almost to the same extent that he was ensnared by her breath-taking beauty. Stacey knew the Gorgon was involved, and he wondered what the situation would be if Koryl did not have the monster's protection.

The others of the group had not missed the incident between the two. They were keenly aware of the power that each possessed, an awareness that showed itself in a sycophantic reaction to the moods of Koryl and Zarduc. Now they were uneasily silent, avoiding Zarduc's blazing glance.

Koryl was facing the Gorgon, who hovered several feet to one side of the group. The high priestess' exquisite lips did not move, but Stacey knew she was in communication with the monster. And as though a faint echo of her mental voice reached him from the monster's mind, with which he knew he was somehow linked, he understood what Koryl was saying.

"Great one from beyond the gateway, I want you to release these two. It was a mistake to imprison them thus. They are strangers from a far land and might indeed possess information which would be of great importance to us. I would speak with them—especially with the one of the yellow eyes and the face of the hunting hawk."

"But they are dangerous, my high priestess," the head's cold thought returned. "They possess strange weapons and knowledge, and might cause you serious harm should they be allowed free in Olin."

"I will take suitable precautions, great one. And with you to aid me, nothing could possibly go wrong."

"You forget that I have many things to do, my high priestess. It may well be that I may not be present to give my help when you need it most."

"I am willing to take the risk."

"This is madness," the Gorgon said sharply, anger stirring in the dark, alien mind. "I am against your wishes, my high priestess."

Koryl straightened rigidly, her green eyes flaming. "You exceed yourself, great one! Remember, it is I who con-

trols the gateway. You will indeed become only a head should you extend further my displeasure. Release me these two—at once!”

SOMETHING flashed into that strange, cold mind with which Stacey was so weirdly in contact. The flash awoke an instant, sympathetic response in his own mind that made an involuntary fright shudder through him. The rage he had sensed awoke a deep-buried, primeval dread in him. It was a rage so vast that it ceased to be emotion. And it went as suddenly as it had come, hidden behind a screen of evil cunning.

Stacey realized that Koryl would someday pay dearly for her arrogance. At present she had the Gorgon's aid and protection, but these were things purchased by her control of the gateway. They would vanish like soap bubbles if she ever lost that control.

There were ugly cross-currents here that disturbed Stacey. The Gorgon, forced to do Koryl's bidding, secretly building a mysterious bridge of pillar-encased humans. Zarduc, bewitched by Koryl's incredible loveliness, yet hating and fearing her. And Koryl, domineering and cruel, inflamed by ambition, trampling ruthlessly over the feelings of those in her power.

A human atomic pile, Stacey thought, swiftly reaching critical mass. If it ever went off, there would be hell to pay a thousand times over.

He didn't like the idea of being released into Koryl's custody, even though it offered a chance of escape. He knew that he might all too easily fall under her spell. And if he were able to resist her, he knew as well that this very resistance would endanger him. His thoughts twisted wryly. The frying pan and the fire.

Aside from this, he didn't want to be

separated from Verla. Their mental union had become very pleasant—more complete in many respects than any physical union could have been.

But his was not the choice. He knew this as the Gorgon at last responded reluctantly to Koryl's demand.

Hideous, alien, yet somehow beautiful, the great head floated closer to Stacey's pillar. Once more he detected in the cold thoughts that touched his mind an impression of strain, but a different sort of strain from that he had previously sensed. Some other bizarre process was about to take place—something, Stacey knew, that would release him from the pillar.

From the Gorgon's mind issued a flow of force that was in some incomprehensible manner like sound, high and keen and nerve-wracking. It rose still higher, awakening agony in Stacey's brain. It struck into the substance of the pillar—and the stuff vibrated from the force of it as a thin glass goblet vibrates to the sustained, high note of a violin. And as a goblet may be thus shattered, so the material of the pillar began to fall in a fine powder about Stacey. The wind seized the powder as it loosened and bore it away in thin, grayish clouds.

Within moments, the pillar was gone. Stacey was still held in paralysis, but free now of his prison.

The head turned to Tobin's pillar, and the process was repeated. Then one of the monster's tentacular growths began moving along Tobin's leg as though searching for something. The tentacle found what it was looking for and made a plucking motion too swift for the eye to follow. Whatever had been removed from Tobin's leg, however, remained invisible.

Returning to Stacey, the Gorgon sent an exploring tentacle along his leg also. He remembered the sting he had felt

before the paralysis had gripped him. He wondered now if the monster were searching for the source of the sting, to remove from the wound something like the stinger of a bee or a wasp. Even as he wondered, the tentacle paused—and plucked. The object, whatever it had been, was gone. Seconds later, Stacey felt the paralysis draining from him.

HIS telepathic powers were leaving him, too. He realized this as the uncanny clarity and keenness of his mind began to fade. Almost too late he remembered Verla. Summoning his dwindling mental powers for one last effort, he called out to her.

"Farewell, Verla. I won't forget you . . . do you understand?"

"Rick! Yes—and farewell . . . dear one."

The treasured mental tones vanished. The old drab and blunted world existed around him once again. He moved his arms slowly, thinking with regret of his lost godhood.

And then he turned his head—and became aware of Koryl. Her beauty seized at him, held him enrapt and fascinated. She seemed even more exquisite at close range than his view of her from the pillar had hinted. He looked into her eyes and found himself sinking as before into their infinite aquamarine depths. Dimly he was aware that they were glittering with excitement, that a faint smile of eagerness lifted the corners of her full, red lips.

The long, gold-brown lashes slowly lowered. Stacey recovered from his plunge with a sensation of rising through ocean depths. He heard Koryl speak in a rich contralto, voicing a question. He shook his head to show that he did not understand—the liquid language of Olin conveyed nothing to him.

He felt dizzy still, and he was grateful for the revivifying touch of the frigid wind on his face.

Koryl nodded her sleek head quickly and flashed a dazzling smile. She had evidently anticipated Stacey's lack of comprehension. And it seemed that she knew just what to do about it. Turning once more to the Gorgon, she resumed her silent mental communication with the thing.

Stacey found the monster gazing at him remotely, a sullen light smouldering deep within its great reddish orbs. Its thoughts formed coldly in his mind.

"The high priestess requests that you and your companion be taught the language of Olin. It shall be done, stranger from a far land. But think not that you have escaped the Gorgon's power!"

A tentacle flicked out, touching Stacey's head. He recoiled instinctively, but the cold, snake-like thing quickly followed the movement, retaining contact. Recovering himself, Stacey remained quiet.

Another tentacle touched Tobin also, and still another came to rest against Koryl's white forehead. A contact with Koryl had been made, Stacey realized, in which the Gorgon was to play the role of a catalyst or power source.

In another moment a weird sensation of numbness spread through Stacey's mind, as though a force of some kind had gripped his brain. The force began to move about within him, impressing upon certain of his memory centers a duplicate of the speech patterns supplied by the mind of Koryl. For long minutes the incredible process went on! New synapse paths were blazed, new neurone linkages formed.

And then, before the confusion in Stacey's mind had time to subside, it was over. He felt the frigid wind on his face again. The haze before his eyes began to lift, and the colors that

swam formlessly before him resolved themselves into the shapes of men and women. He saw Koryl close before him, her exquisite features anxious. Her contralto voice sounded softly in his ears.

"You have not been injured? Speak!"

"I . . . I'm all right." And then Stacey gasped. "Why, I can understand you!"

"Of course, stranger. And your friend as well."

"But . . . but how did it happen? As far as I know, such a thing is impossible."

Koryl shrugged her white, sleekly rounded shoulders. "Few things are impossible to the Gorgon. She possesses great knowledge and powers."

"So I see." Stacey rubbed the back of his hand slowly across his forehead and glanced at Tobin. The other returned his look blankly, blue eyes dazed.

STILL struggling to accustom himself to what had happened, Stacey's gaze chanced across the pillar within which was Verla's slim, exotically lovely figure. He stared at her with a faint surprise, fully aware for the first time of the barrier that now existed between them. The intimacy they had shared now seemed merely a dream.

"You find her attractive?" Koryl asked softly, following the direction of Stacey's eyes.

He recovered himself quickly. He wanted to avoid exposing Verla to harm by arousing Koryl's jealousy. He said: "All the women here seem attractive."

Koryl's lips lifted in a slow smile. Beneath lowered lids her green eyes were intent and hard. "Some more so than others, perhaps?"

Deliberately he let his eyes travel over her. He nodded. "That's true.

I was trying to be a gentleman and give all the ladies credit."

"A wise gentleman remembers that some ladies deserve a greater amount of credit," Koryl said.

Zarduc growled, "Must we spend the entire day in this place, Koryl? You may find the conversation interesting, but it makes me wish for strong drink—or to wring a throat or two."

Koryl's rich laughter chimed on the cold air. Her aquamarine gaze was mocking. "Do you have any particular throats in mind, bloody one?"

"Aye, that I have." The chieftain's baleful glance settled on Stacey.

Koryl laughed again. With a sudden, lithe movement she came close to Stacey and linked her arm in his. She gestured with her free hand at the bubble-like craft. "There are better places in which to carry on our conversation. We shall return to the city." She glanced up at Stacey as the pressure of her arm urged him into motion. "You and your companion are my guests, of course. And you shall remain such . . . as long as you both conduct yourselves in a manner befitting guests. But I'm sure you will appreciate my hospitality after your sojourn in the pillars of the Gorgon."

Stacey returned her gaze grimly. "I understand what you mean," he said.

They reached the transparent bubble craft. Stacey noted curiously that the machine was about a dozen feet in diameter and seemed constructed of some material like glass or clear plastic. A short ladder led up to a deck near the middle of the craft. Here a continuous bench followed the curve of the wall. In the middle of the transparent floor was a slender pedestral or column, in the top of which were set a number of levers, obviously controls. Stacey could see that the column went through the floor, merging into the propulsion mech-

anism below. This seemed very simple in detail. Stacey had a strong urge to examine it at close hand.

Stacey followed Koryl up the ladder and into the circular cabin. She gestured him to a seat on the bench beside her, and with a faint grin—knowing he could hardly do otherwise—he complied.

Tobin entered next, his blue eyes round with interest as he, too, examined the craft. His bewilderment seemed to have left him.

Then came Zarduc, followed by the others. Evidently taking their cue from Koryl, the group was in high spirits again, laughing and jostling as they took their seats.

Zarduc took his place before the controls, and presently the craft lifted into the air, the Gorgon following a short distance behind.

CHAPTER V

STACEY watched Zarduc for a moment, noting at the same time the bubble craft's swift ascent. There was only a faint humming sound from the propulsion mechanism. The lack of noise or vibration, combined with the transparent walls, gave Stacey the odd sensation of floating in the air.

The pillars spread over the valley floor were swiftly dwindling in size and detail. Stacey sought for the one in which Verla was encased. With an aching sense of loss, he realized that he could no longer find it. Grimly he told himself that he would return. He intended to make every effort to free the girl.

The craft ceased rising and shifted effortlessly into horizontal flight. Stacey found himself admiring Zarduc's deft handling of the controls. Barbarian though he might be in other ways, the man had the abilities of a natural pilot.

Koryl said, "You seem greatly interested in the operation of the air ship. Do not the people of your land possess such machines?"

Stacey nodded. "Yes, though they are much different in appearance and operation." He didn't think it necessary to add that the aircraft of his race were in some respects inferior to the bubble ship.

Koryl added shrewdly, "Then that must be the method by which you arrived in Olin."

Stacey nodded again.

"What became of your machine?"

"It has been seriously damaged," Stacey lied. It would be best, he thought, for Koryl to consider him completely in her power. That way his and Tobin's chances of escape would be increased. If they ever did get out of Olin, the plane would be waiting for them—intact. The ice in the fuel lines could be removed without too much difficulty.

He embroidered on the falsehood, explaining that the plane's engines had stopped because of the cold and that it had crashed while he and Tobin attempted to land. Koryl followed his story with excitedly widened green eyes.

"It is fortunate that you escaped harm," she murmured at last. Then she frowned prettily. "Do you realize that you have not yet told me your name?"

Stacey hastened to make up for the omission, as was clearly expected of him. He introduced Tobin and himself, giving their naval airforce rank.

"A warrior!" Koryl exclaimed in delight. She whirled to Zarduc. "Do you hear, my bloody one? These men are warriors in their own land!"

The brooding scowl with which the other had been piloting the bubble ship grew darker. "They may not be very great warriors in this land, however," he grunted.

"That remains to be seen." Koryl returned her attention to Stacey. "Have you fought many battles?"

"Quite a few." He had entered the Pacific War while it was still getting under way, and had seen more than his share of the fighting. He told Koryl of this, exaggerating details here and there to satisfy her evident eagerness for the bloodily dramatic.

Then, prompted by her questions, he went on to tell her of the lands and people of the outer world, repeating substantially what he had previously told Verla. As he talked, he watched the progress of the bubble ship toward the spires which marked the location of the ice-covered city of Olin.

THE spires had grown steadily in size. Seen from the valley, they had appeared small and featureless, but now it was evident that they were huge—fully as large as the skyscrapers of a modern American city. The spires lacked the simplicity of modern American architecture, however. They were elaborately terraced and ornamented, covered with numerous carvings and bas-reliefs. Lavish use of metal, marble, and rainbow-hued tile added to the appearance of ornateness and grandeur. The visible portion of the city had a fantastic quality, as though it were imaginative rather than real. It was a fairy city, limned weirdly against the bleak background of ice and snow.

Stacey could find no suggestion of streets or avenues, though he knew in the past there must have been splendid thoroughfares among the great buildings. And parks and gardens as well. But now there was only a blanket of snow and ice. Stacey saw few signs of life. Once or twice a bubble ship glinted briefly in the far distance as it moved among the spires. Otherwise an oppressive air of desertion hung over the

city.

Over what seemed the approximate center of Olin, Zarduc finally sent the bubble craft dropping down to a landing. Their destination, Stacey saw, was a building larger and more lavishly decorated than the rest. About a dominating central spire, which was surmounted by a huge metal statue, a number of smaller spires were grouped. The walls of all were elaborately carved and inlaid. Very broad, arched windows, vaguely Gothic in outline, appeared at regular intervals.

The central spire dropped away in a series of widening terraces. Upon the topmost of these, Zarduc settled the bubble ship to a landing.

Koryl caught Stacey's glance and gestured. "This is the ancient palace of the rulers of Olin. It is here that I, Koryl, the high priestess of the Gorgon, hold power."

Stacey nodded as though the information were news to him. He noticed Tobin's faintly puzzled look and shook his head slightly. For some reason, it seemed, Koryl was unaware of the telepathic communication possible to those within the pillars, and Stacey preferred that she remain ignorant of the fact. Escape for Tobin and himself would be easier if Koryl did not suspect that they had been prejudiced against her by their contact with Verla.

Beckoning to Stacey, Koryl rose and lithely descended from the ship. A number of armed men, obviously guards, had appeared on the terrace from a broad doorway in the building. Their weapons, Stacey noted curiously, consisted of a device like a flare-muzzled rifle, a sword, and a dagger. He decided that not many of the ancient weapons were left if such less efficient arms as a sword were also used.

Koryl swept into the building escorted by the guards, who seemed

cringingly servile in her presence. Walking a few steps behind her with Tobin, Stacey found himself in a broad hall, which was luxuriously decorated in the exotically ornate style he had already noted as typical of Olin.

Koryl had advanced only a short distance down the hall, when a group of girls appeared and clustered about her. They began to remove her transparent covering, while others fell to arranging her cape of golden hair and dabbing her face with perfumed lotions. Their ministrations were accompanied by many curious glances at Stacey and Tobin.

As Stacey watched, slightly bewildered by the activity, another group appeared, this time consisting of a number of men. Zarduc and the others were now attended to. When Zarduc's covering was removed, he was obsequiously handed a sword and dagger and a pistol-shaped device with a flaring muzzle like that of the rifles held by the guards. With the Gorgon present, Stacey decided, Zarduc had previously had no need for weapons. Thought of the monster made him glance about, but it was no longer in evidence.

KORYL finally waved her attendants aside. "I shall leave you to see that our guests are made comfortable for the present," she told Zarduc. "Conduct them to the proper chambers and see that they are provided with every convenience."

Zarduc nodded sourly. "Is that all, my high priestess? Do you not also wish me to bathe and feed them? These, it seems, are what you consider the more important duties of the chief of your warriors."

"With the Gorgon to aid you, my great chief, you do not have too much to do," Koryl answered maliciously. She

turned to Stacey, her features softening. "Farewell for now, Rick Stacey. I shall see you again . . . soon."

He nodded, disturbed despite himself by the faint suggestion of promise in her voice. Emotions clashing, he watched as she strode away in the midst of her attendants, a vision of bewitching loveliness.

She was utterly heartless, he knew; and vain and arrogant as well. In her ruthless quest for power, she had allied herself with an evil and virtually omnipotent monster from some unknown extra-dimensional realm, murdering and enslaving her own people. Yet even these things somehow seemed mitigated by her overpowering, extravagant beauty. She could easily make a fool out of a man, he thought. And he wondered if he was going to be that man. Avoiding it was going to be difficult.

For others had already fallen under her spell. Zarduc was clearly one of these. The muscled chieftain might protest against her frequently humiliating commands, but in the end he obeyed them—as he was doing now.

As if aware of Stacey's musing, Zarduc turned to him with a fierce scowl. One of his big, scarred hands rested on the curving butt of the flare-muzzled pistol at his belt. He grunted:

"If this matter were left to my choice, stranger, I would chop you into pieces and make you swallow every single one of them."

"I have as much choice as you do," Stacey returned with a shrug. "So there's no reason for hard feelings."

Zarduc's scowl faded slightly. "You speak like a man of sense—but I fear you may not have any sense left once Koryl sets to work on you."

Turning to the guards, the chieftain barked swift commands. An escort formed about Stacey and Tobin, and

they were led down the corridor. Zarduc, marching with military precision in the lead, set a brisk pace.

At the end of the corridor they descended to a lower floor of the building by means of a vaguely elevator-like platform in a circular shaft, which seemed to move through some process of gravity nullification, since no cables were in evidence. Zarduc led the way down another corridor, stopping presently before an arched doorway. He gestured Stacey and Tobin into the room beyond.

"You both will remain here for the present," he said. "And by remain, I will have you understand I mean just that. There will be guards outside the door to see that you do not set yourselves to wandering."

"I thought we were guests," Stacey said.

Zarduc lifted his big shoulders. "Only where Koryl is concerned. This is of her choosing, not mine. I shall deal with you in my own way." His pale blue eyes fastened grimly on Stacey. "You will be wise to remember that, stranger. Koryl is taken with you, but you will do well not to make too much of it. I have certain . . . prior claims, we might say. And I am second in command here in Olin, which means I am not without rights of my own. I can make unpleasant things happen to you, should you go too far with Koryl."

"And Koryl will make unpleasant things happen to me if I don't go far enough," Stacey pointed out.

One corner of Zarduc's full lips rose in a thin, wolfish smile. "That is indeed unfortunate, stranger.

"Look," Stacey said. "You don't want us here. As far as that goes, my friend and I don't want to be here. So why not help us to escape? That would solve a problem for all of us."

"It would accomplish nothing, stran-

ger. You have admitted that your airship is wrecked. And without it, the Gorgon would recapture you before you could get very far."

STACEY thought of telling Zarduc that the plane hadn't been wrecked after all, that he had been lying to Koryl. But he didn't know what effect the information might have. The plane was his and Tobin's ace in the hole, and he wished to run no slightest risk of losing it. He shrugged and remained silent.

Zarduc prepared to leave. "I will send servants to look after your needs. In the meantime, bear in mind that guards will be stationed beyond the door. And bear in mind as well the warning I have given you."

Then the chieftain turned and strode from the room, the door closing with an air of finality behind him. Stacey and Tobin were alone, gazing at each other in hopeless silence.

At last Stacey turned away, his eyes running over the room. It was large and luxuriously furnished. And it was pleasantly warm, as the entire building seemed to be. For the first time Stacey became fully aware of the warmth. He began slowly to strip off his fur parka and the leather flying suit beneath.

After a moment Tobin followed suit, dropping listlessly onto a low, very broad couch, which was strewn thickly with pillows. "I thought being in the pillars was bad enough, Rick, but this seems an even worse mess."

Stacey nodded wryly. "If Koryl doesn't get as much attention as she thinks she should get, she'll most likely sic the Gorgon on me. And if I give her too much attention, friend Zarduc will slide one of his knives into my back."

"There's the plane, Rick. They don't know it's still in good shape. I watched Zarduc operating the ship that brought

us here, and it looks easy enough. If we could get hold of one, we could reach the plane before the Gorgon knew what was going on."

"It might work—but I don't know if I want to try it, Phil."

"Why not? You know the fix you're in."

"There's Verla. I'd like to help her. And her people, too. If we could get in touch with the ones in lower Olin, we might be able to work out something. I ought to be able to stall off Koryl and Zarduc that long."

Tobin seemed about to protest, but in another instant he nodded slowly. "I understand how you feel, Rick. There aren't many girls like Verla. If she were even faintly interested in me, I'd tear the whole city apart for her. . . . OK, Rick, we'll stick it out." Tobin's round features became wistful. "Maybe there's a girl like Verla in Lower Olin somewhere. . . ."

Another silence fell. Stacey went to investigate a doorway in one of the splendidly carved and inlaid walls of the chamber. He found himself gazing into a tile-walled room which was obviously a bath, for in the center was a broad waist-high cylinder of carved marble that could only have been a tub. He was examining this at close hand when Tobin appeared in the doorway.

"Visitors, Rick."

Returning to the chamber, Stacey saw that two youths had entered. They were simply dressed and without ornaments of any kind. He decided that the two were the servants Zarduc had mentioned he would send.

"Make yourselves comfortable, boys," Stacey said with a grin, gesturing at a couch. "In my land we help ourselves—unless we can afford not to."

"But . . . but it isn't proper—" one of the two blurted, his young face bewildered. "It is our duty to serve you."

"If you refuse our service, we will be punished for having displeased you," the other added.

"Punished, eh?" Stacey considered, scratching his chin. "Well, you can show me and my friend how to use things that are strange to us. That way nobody can say your service is being refused. But jobs like washing my back, I'll take care of myself."

The two reluctantly accepted this compromise. Their names, Stacey learned, were Parn and Trek. Parn was the taller and more mature of the pair, obviously the leader. Both, however, were finely proportioned, their features clean-cut and intelligent.

Guided by the instructions of the two, Stacey and Tobin bathed in turn. The tub was filled and emptied by manipulating a series of metal flowers ornamenting the inner rim. Drying was accomplished by a device set in the wall that seemed to draw moisture into itself. The bath finished with, Stacey and Tobin were shown how to apply a lotion-like liquid which completely dissolved the whisker stubble on their faces.

"That's one thing I'd like to take back with me," Tobin said in admiration. "A guy could make a fortune with that stuff in the States."

STACEY nodded in bemused fashion, his thoughts centering around a different matter as he finished dressing. He turned finally to Parn.

"You said something about being punished if your service was refused. What did you mean by that? Losing your wages, getting scolded—or being thrown to the Gorgon?"

"A fate almost as bad as that of being thrown to the Gorgon," Parn said.

"In my land a servant would quit. Is it possible that you can't quit—that

you and Trek are being forced to do this kind of work?"

"We're slaves!" Trek said abruptly, a long-pent bitterness surging into his face.

Stacey said softly, "Then I gather that you two aren't in sympathy with Koryl and her followers in Upper Olin."

Quivering visibly, Trek glanced at Parn. But the other remained silent, his features wooden. Trek bit his lip and remained silent also.

Stacey hadn't overlooked the possibility that the two might be spies. But spies would have been eager to supply him with information in the hope of drawing out damaging admissions. The behavior of Parn and Trek amply indicated that they were no henchmen of Koryl or Zarduc.

Full confidence now flowed into Stacey. He spoke swiftly, leaning close to Parn and Trek.

"I have been in the pillars, and I have talked with Verla. That is how I know so much about Olin. Verla and the people of Lower Olin have my sympathy. I want to help them. I want first of all to free Verla from the pillars.

"But I must have help. And Jendon of Lower Olin is the only one I know who can give me the kind of help I need. Somehow my friend and I must escape and reach Jendon. Together we should be able to free Verla somehow. That would mean new hope for Verla's people."

"But you are a guest of Koryl!" Trek said sharply.

"A guest in name only. The guards outside the door are not guards of honor."

Trek's lips quivered again, but Parn quickly laid a hand on his shoulder. Parn's face was still wooden, and Stacey knew that it would be impossible for the present to overcome the youth's sus-

picious. Yet he didn't entirely despair. The seed had been planted. Indications were good that it would eventually bear fruit.

The door suddenly opened. Zarduc stalked into the room, a black scowl on his face.

CHAPTER VI

A COLD wave of alarm washed over Stacey. Had Zarduc somehow heard what he had told Parn and Trek? In that event, Stacey knew, precautions would be taken that would prevent him from ever getting into contact with the people of Lower Olin.

But in another moment it became clear that Zarduc's scowl was due to a different reason. And that reason, Stacey decided, was most likely Koryl. Probably Zarduc had had another quarrel with her—a quarrel from which he had again emerged second best.

Stacey smiled a grim, inward smile. Zarduc's emotions were rising to a dangerous point. Judging from the violent, bloodthirsty nature of the man, things were going to start happening sooner or later.

Zarduc paid no attention to Parn and Trek other than to order them from the room with a sharp gesture. Then he concentrated the full force of his scowl on Stacey.

"All bathed and perfumed, eh, my pretty one?"

Stacey grinned faintly. "And you've been rolling in muck as usual, eh, my lovely one?"

While Tobin coughed in a strange fashion, Zarduc grew rigid, his lips pinching together into a pale line.

"Warrior's blood, stranger, you go too far with your insults!"

"No farther than you go with yours," Stacey said.

Zarduc's hand trembled on the hilt

of the dagger at his belt. A long, straining interval passed. Slowly the furious chieftain grew calm.

"I am unable to take forthright measures, stranger—but I will have my revenge before long. Bear that in mind." A moment longer Zarduc's icy blue gaze impaled Stacey. Then he jerked his helmeted head in the direction of the door. "Now you will come with me. Koryl has ordered a banquet held in your honor. I am sure you would not want to keep her waiting."

Shrugging, Stacey followed with Tobin as the chieftain stalked from the room. Beneath his outward unconcern, Stacey's thoughts were grim. He knew Zarduc bitterly resented his and Tobin's presence in Upper Olin. And it seemed that the man had hit upon some scheme for removing them. Stacey didn't know what that scheme was, but he felt certain that it would be unpleasant—and fatal.

He bleakly promised himself that he would put up a-whale of a fight. And—he touched the automatic in a hip pocket of his gray khaki trousers—he had the means with which to do it. Tobin was also still in possession of his gun. They hadn't been searched for weapons. Perhaps Koryl and Zarduc had been too confident of the Gorgon's protection to bother. Or perhaps, judging from the conspicuous size of the weapons in Upper Olin, it had been assumed from the fact that no armament was in direct evidence upon Stacey and Tobin, that they had not possessed any.

With guards surrounding them and Zarduc in the lead, Stacey and Tobin were taken through the ornate corridors, to another of the circular shafts with its elevator-like platform. They descended to a still lower floor of the building. A walk through further corridors brought them finally to a vast and splendidly decorated dining hall, which

echoed to the boisterous talk and laughter of a large gathering of men and women.

The noise swiftly faded as Zarduc appeared with Stacey and Tobin. Excited whispers and curious stares greeted the two men from the outer world.

ZARDUC grew straighter and more military in bearing, as though becoming more than ever conscious of his importance. He led the way toward the apex of a very long, low table which was built in the form of an angle. Instead of chairs, there were thick cushions on both sides of the two branches of the table, and the gathering sat or reclined on these. Stacey was briefly reminded of the banquets of ancient Rome, which had taken place in a much similar fashion.

Glancing toward the open end of the angle formed by the table, Stacey saw a group of over a dozen plainly-clad girls who were busying themselves before three huge metal and tile cabinets. These seemed to be machines of some sort, for they were covered with a multitude of wheels and levers and differently colored lights. A moment later Stacey realized that these were the food producing machines which Verla had mentioned.

As he neared the apex of the table, Stacey noticed for the first time that Koryl was already present. Directly before the apex, she reclined on a deeply upholstered, low couch, the only one in the room. She had exchanged the harness and skirt which she had worn previously for an iridescent, jeweled robe which flowed in revealing, gauzy folds over the rich curves of her figure. She wore a tiara even larger and more splendid than the first Stacey had seen, and from under this her mantle of hair fell in a golden flood about her white

shoulders. She was, he decided, slightly terrific. Hollywood would have been wild about her.

Red lips parted in a dazzling smile, Koryl gestured Stacey to a seat on the cushions at her right, indicating that Tobin was to place himself beside Stacey. In cold silence, his glance at her sullen, Zarduc dropped to the cushions at Koryl's left. The chieftain proceeded to stare broodingly at the table before him.

Koryl leaned toward Stacey, her aquamarine eyes bright and confiding. "My people are very much interested in you."

"I'm quite flattered," Stacey said. "But I'd say they're wasting their time. I'm not very important where I came from."

"But you are important here," Koryl returned. She leaned closer, the jeweled robe slipping dangerously along the sleek curves of her shoulders. "In fact, Rick Stacey, you could become very important here in time."

It was with difficulty that Stacey kept his eyes from straying to the dwindling boundaries of the robe. He shrugged. "I'm not interested in becoming important. From my experience, important people usually have a lot of trouble."

"That is not necessarily true in Upper Olin," Koryl said with a laugh, though it was evident that Stacey's answer had not pleased her. With a quick, almost fretful motion, she pulled the robe back up over her shoulders.

The servant girls before the three huge food machines had now finished their preparations. Bearing steaming bowls and platters, they advanced in a carefully formed wedge toward the apex of the table. Koryl first was served, then Stacey, Tobin, and Zarduc. Finally attention was given to the others nearest the apex, and in turn to those further away. The importance of the

guests present at the two branches of the table obviously fell in proportion to their distance from Koryl.

THE food, Stacey found, was spicy and exotic in flavor, though palatable. It consisted of variously colored jellies and pastes, with several other dishes that had the appearance, texture, and taste of meat. However artificial the whole might have seemed, Stacey knew that it was undoubtedly highly nutritious.

In addition to the main foods there was a variety of breads and sweet pastries, with numerous beakers and flasks of colored liquids which were evidently liquors and wines. Koryl selected one of the containers and personally filled Stacey's goblet. She smiled at him, her pique of a moment before apparently forgotten.

He sipped at the contents of his goblet—and gasped in surprise. The stuff was potent. The little he had swallowed surged in waves of heady warmth to his brain. He would have to be careful. Too much of the liquid, and he'd go out like a light.

Later, however, he found that this was not true. A large quantity could be imbibed without harm. While intoxication resulted, there was no loss of consciousness. Nor were there any ill-effects afterward.

Stacey's attention was diverted from the food by a flurry of activity in the space beyond the open end formed by the angle of the table. A group of men had appeared, laboriously moving the huge food machines to one side of the hall. After them came a gathering of men and women dressed in bright costumes, the men carrying strange devices which proved shortly to be musical instruments. A number of large metal bowls supported by tripods were distributed about in a star-like pattern.

Tendrils of smoke coiled upwards from these, filling the hall with a fragrant blue haze.

The musicians took their places at one side of the hall, and presently the sound of their instruments rose and blended in a growing flood of melody. Higher the music rose, and higher, taking on a swift and pagan tempo that caught at the pulses irresistibly. Stacey had never heard music like that before. It seemed to carry elements of jazz or boogie-woogie, yet held an insistent undertone of qualities that were wild and primitive. He found the music stirring him in a way that he definitely did not like.

The costumed girls had been poised among the tripods, statuesque, arms outspread. Now they swept together in a dance that increased in pace to the rhythm of the melody flooding in throbbing waves throughout the hall. They whirled faster and ever faster, weaving in and out among the tripods, merging and separating, twisting and leaping.

Stacey watched until he became aware of a faint dizziness, that seemed in some way to be accompanied by a sense of excitement and stimulation. He decided that this was the effect of the faint blue smoke curling from the bowls. He had been careful not to drink the contents of his goblet too often.

This, he noticed, was something Tobin had failed to do. The other was surrounded by a group of pretty and scantily-clad girls, who were plying him with questions and filling his goblet as rapidly as he emptied it. It was evident that Tobin was having the time of his life. His round, freckled features were flushed, and he laughed often as he teased his listeners.

But for that matter, Stacey saw, most of the other guests were already in an even worse condition. With shouts and laughs that rose above the wild, pulse-

quickening music, they were indulging in uninhibited horseplay and love-making. Quarrels were many and frequent. At one point, two men rose unsteadily to their feet and threw themselves at each other in a fierce if clumsy fight with long daggers. The duel ended abruptly as one of them fell to the floor with a nasty gash in his side. He was carried from the hall amid scattered hand-claps for the victor. Except for this, the fight had attracted little attention.

THE banquet was turning into a debauch much too rapidly for Stacey's peace of mind. There were undercurrents of stark savagery beneath the veneer of culture that overlay the life of Upper Olin. The potent drinks combined with the strangely stimulating blue smoke and the pagan music, were tearing the veneer away. The savagery was coming to the surface, reaching a depth where anything could happen.

While observing events about him, Stacey had managed to keep responding to questions and conversational sallies directed at him by Koryl. Now he turned his full attention to her.

"Don't you think your party is getting out of hand?"

She gave a shrug of unconcern. "I can always summon the guards to restore order. Or even the Gorgon, if necessary. But affairs of this sort are desirable in a way. They release inner pressures which would otherwise seek more dangerous outlets." She studied Stacey with a mocking smile. "I gather that you do not approve of what you have seen."

"I don't," he said. "Does this sort of thing go on all the time?"

"As often as anyone can find an excuse for it. There is not much else to do in Upper Olin."

"I can think of a lot of things to do,

There's the advancement of knowledge, the improving of living conditions."

Koryl shrugged again. "Those are for men too old to enjoy pleasure. Or for dreamers."

"The worth of a civilization is often measured by the work of its dreamers," Stacey pointed out.

"Perhaps—though we of Upper Olin live to enjoy living. We find enough of worth in that. . . . I can see, Rick Stacey, that you are somewhat of a dreamer yourself."

"I suppose I am."

"Of what do you dream?"

"The things dreamers usually dream about."

"Women among them?"

Stacey grinned slightly. "Depending on the time and place, yes." He thought suddenly and with a pang of Verla.

"No doubt you have many women in your own land," Koryl went on, following the new track of conversation.

"I *know* many," Stacey corrected. "But a man in my profession doesn't get to know them well. It's a here to-day, gone tomorrow sort of life."

"Then you do not have a mate, or children?"

"Suppose I told you I had a dozen mates and an army of children?"

Koryl's mocking smile flashed again. "It would not be important."

"Zarduc might not think so," Stacey said, glancing at the man. He had noticed that the chieftain was slyly eavesdropping on his talk with Koryl.

Becoming aware that his stratagem had been discovered, Zarduc flushed angrily. Koryl's next words fanned the anger into a hot blaze of rage.

"What Zarduc thinks does not concern me."

"There was a time when it did," the chieftain shot back. "That was before the coming of this cursed stranger. I am not blind to the fact that you have

taken a fancy to him, Koryl."

"And why not, my bloody one? Rick Stacey is . . . nice. I find talking with him a contest of wits that is very enjoyable. That is more than I can say for your constant bad humor."

"But he has no right to any claims on you."

"Nor do you have a right to any claims, my bloody one. I have given you certain favors because of your position, but you must not assume too much from this. I am the high priestess of the Gorgon and the ruler of Upper Olin. What I give, I have every power to take away."

ZARDUC abruptly leaned forward, his pale blue eyes glittering and intense. "You forget something, Koryl! You forget the warriors code!"

She stiffened, dismay flashing into her face. "You do not dare invoke the code, Zarduc. I forbid it!"

A grin of triumph now curving his full lips, the chieftain shook his head slowly. "You know you cannot forbid it, Koryl. No ruler has ever gone against the code, not when two warriors were involved. And never when one of them was a chieftain. You cannot afford to make an exception now."

"You think not? You think not, Zarduc?" Koryl began gathering herself as though to rise, her green eyes blazing. "The rulers of the past did not have the Gorgon to aid them. I do! If you defy me, I shall have the Gorgon add you to her collection of victims in the pillars."

"Think, Koryl," Zarduc returned quietly. "By going against the code, you will set the whole warrior class against you. The warriors are many, the Gorgon only one. And the Gorgon cannot be everywhere at once. She has great power, but lacks the advantage of numbers. Without the warriors to aid her, many dangers will soon threaten

your rule in Upper Olin."

Koryl relaxed slowly, her lower lip caught between her teeth. By degrees an expression of defeat spread over her face. Finally she turned to Stacey.

"Rick Stacey, Zarduc has invoked the ancient warriors code by which he may engage you in a duel to defend his honor—a duel to the death. I cannot refuse this duel, since you are both warriors. And since you are a warrior, Rick Stacey, you cannot refuse to engage Zarduc. Else he wins by default, and you will be banished from Olin."

"That suits me fine," Stacey said. "Tobin and I will leave right now if you say so."

Koryl shook her head slowly. "In this case, I cannot allow you to go free. There is too much danger in what you may tell the outer world. You and your companion will be returned to the pillars of the Gorgon."

"Hold on," Stacey said. "I don't see how I got mixed up in this to begin with. What did I do to make Zarduc want to defend his honor?"

"You took my place in Koryl's favors," Zarduc said. "According to the warriors' code, I may engage you in a duel. This will show Koryl which of us is the better man."

Koryl said tonelessly, "Do you accept, Rick Stacey?"

"I don't suppose I would gain anything by refusing." Within Stacey a dull anger surged. He saw it now. This was what Zarduc had been planning. The man had been devilishly clever, leaving no loophole in his scheme through which Stacey or Koryl could evade his designs.

As though aware of Stacey's thoughts, the chieftain grinned mockingly. "As the injured party, I have the choice of weapons, stranger. Also the choice of place and time. The weapons, then, daggers. The place, *here*—the time,

now!"

CHAPTER VII

ZARDUC leaped to his feet. Vaulting the table, he strode several paces toward the open end, his arms raised for silence. Quickly silence came. The music stopped, the dancing girls became motionless, the talk and laughter faded.

"I announce a duel," Zarduc said in ringing tones that seemed to fill the hall. "It will take place at once. The participants are myself and Rick Stacey, the stranger from the outer world."

A tumult of excitement broke loose. The hall echoed to cheers and bursts of handclapping.

Zarduc began removing his outer clothing. Finally he stood ready, wearing only a short metallic skirt and laced buskins and gripping a dagger whose blade glittered evilly in the light.

Stacey had the weird sensation that he was living a dream. The abrupt way events had built up to a serious crisis somehow didn't seem real.

He felt Koryl grip his arm. Her low, tense voice sounded in his ears.

"Go, Rick Stacey. Fight . . . and win—for me!"

He rose to his feet. Someone thrust a dagger into his hand. Still with that dream-like feeling, he stepped over the table and walked slowly toward Zarduc.

Across a space of a dozen feet they at last faced each other, circling slowly. Then Zarduc suddenly darted forward, his blade stabbing at Stacey's chest.

The swift movement jolted Stacey into full alertness. Into his mind flashed memories of a judo course he had taken. He would need every bit of it now. He was anything but an expert in knife fighting, as Zarduc very obviously was.

Stacey darted aside, his leg outstretched. In the next instant he felt

One muscular hand lifted the dagger above Stacey's throat and he grasped desperately for it





Zarduc's weight jar against the limb, but he was not quick enough to seize the other's knife wrist as it flashed by.

Tripped, Zarduc plunged to the floor. Stacey, too, was out of balance, falling to one knee. Before he could recover

himself and take advantage of Zarduc's momentarily prone position, the chieftain leaped once more to his feet.

Fury twisted the man's face. But a new caution was there as well. He began circling carefully, moving easily

and lightly on his feet, his eyes narrowed and intent.

Zarduc shifted, feinting, then closing in as Stacey gave back. Stacey's mind was cold and tense. Retreat. That was the thing. This was no time for heroics. Retreat—then turn the force of the enemy's own onslaught against him.

Again and again Zarduc feinted. And then, crouching low, he rushed, having maneuvered Stacey into a position where the tripping strategy could not be repeated.

Stacey stepped forward. His forearm crashed against Zarduc's knife wrist, knocking it harmlessly to one side. Then, feet braced, he took the full force of Zarduc's rush against his hip, turning with it, his elbow smashing between the other's shoulders.

ZARDUC started to go down. But with a cat-like swiftness and an amazing presence of mind, he caught Stacey around the leg. And then, as he hit the floor, he gave a powerful tug that brought Stacey half atop him. Instantly Zarduc twisted, whirling himself over Stacey, one muscular hand fastening on Stacey's throat. The other hand, gripping the dagger, rose high . . . poised—swept down.

Desperately Stacey countered with his wrist. He was almost too late. He felt a searing pain as Zarduc's blade sliced glancingly along his forearm. An immediate attack with his own blade was impossible, for the hand was pinned beneath him.

Stacey writhed with frantic violence, vividly and painfully aware of the iron fingers clutching at his throat. The breath he needed so badly was being cut off. His efforts did not succeed in dislodging Zarduc from atop him, but he managed to pull his knife hand free. Clumsily he swept the point at Zarduc's face.

The other twisted his head aside with less than an inch to spare. He was forced to release Stacey's throat to protect himself from the menace of the freed blade. He caught Stacey's forearm, shifting his grip an instant later to the wrist, forcing it to one side. His own knife wrist was already held in the laboring clutch of Stacey's other hand.

Furiously they strained, one striving to bring his point into deadly contact with the other. It was a contest of sheer strength. Weakened by having had his breath choked off, Stacey did not dare let it continue. He had to do something—and do it fast.

He allowed his resistance momentarily to weaken. Zarduc eagerly pressed his advantage, driving his full weight behind his knife hand. Stacey had planned for that. He heaved around under the force of the thrust, twisting Zarduc to one side . . . back—and over.

The trick might have allowed him to push his dagger down against Zarduc's loosened grip, but the other, it seemed, had gained an understanding of Stacey's fighting tactics. He kept moving, now using Stacey's own inertia against him. Pulling Stacey in his wake, Zarduc sought to pin him down once more. The momentum, however, was too great to overcome. Stacey added to it by pulling in turn. They rolled over and over along the floor until the bulk of the low table brought them up short. They struggled savagely for a new advantage, twisting and heaving.

The hall was a scene of wild disorder. Most of the guests were on their feet, shouting and cheering. As many of the cheers were for Stacey as for Zarduc.

Koryl alone had retained her seat. She sat tensely at the edge of the low couch, her green eyes shining with excitement.

Tobin was among those who took little or no interest in the struggle as the

result of too many drinks. He was mumbling incoherently as he lay among the cushions, his head pillowed on the lap of a pretty dark-haired girl.

Stacey and Zarduc had rolled away from the table. But now, as they threshed and twisted over the floor, Stacey abruptly found himself jammed against it. Before his mind had time to grasp Zarduc's intention, he felt the back of his knife hand shoved savagely against the table's sharp edge. Numbness shot through his arm, and an instant later he realized that the dagger had flown from his involuntarily splayed fingers.

He was unarmed. And he knew he would remain so. Zarduc would give him no opportunity to recover the weapon.

This, Stacey remembered, was a fight to the death.

SOMETHING exploded in his mind.

With a burst of strength, fired by reserves of energy that he had not known he possessed, he heaved violently with his legs, throwing Zarduc over him and half across the table. Then he writhed aside, twisted to hands and knees, and pushed himself erect.

Even as he turned to face Zarduc once more, the other leaped up from the table and threw himself at Stacey in a lunge, the dagger raised high. Stacey almost grinned. It was a perfect set-up.

He ducked under the stroke, catching Zarduc's knife wrist as it descended. Then the full force of Zarduc's rushing body came down on his shoulders. He was ready for it. He twisted and Zarduc flew through the air, going completely over the table and hitting the floor on the other side, amid the screams of startled guests in the vicinity.

Smiling faintly, a hard, cold, and

wholly merciless smile, Stacey went after his man. He leaped the table, bent, caught the dazed warrior chieftain by the hair, and hauled him half upright. His other hand, balled into a rock-like fist, smashed into Zarduc's chest. Zarduc straightened with a gasp of pain, and then another fist thudded against his mouth, driving him back.

Stacey followed step by step, raining in one punishing blow after another. Under the onslaught Zarduc's last feeble defenses crumbled. The dagger had dropped from his hand. He tottered weakly; eyes half closed, legs buckling.

The gathering in the hall had gone mad. As one, they were now cheering Stacey on, shrieking for blood. He knew he could easily have satisfied them. Zarduc's fallen dagger was within easy reach. But he could not find it within himself to take the man's life.

Instead he brought up his right fist in a short, chopping blow that took Zarduc flush on the jaw. The chieftain dropped limply and lay still.

It was only then that Stacey awoke to the din of cheering all about him.

Koryl hurried forward. "You were wonderful!" she cried above the noise. "I have never seen such fighting." She gazed up at Stacey a moment. And then her gold-brown lashes lowered and a slow smile curved the corners of her red lips. "You have fought for my favors, Rick Stacey. And you have won. I am yours . . . gladly and willingly."

Stacey returned her glance. She was intoxicatingly beautiful, the very essence of desirable womanhood. But he remembered that she was evil and cruel as well. And again he found himself thinking of Verla. Even now, superimposed on Koryl's face, he saw a picture of the girl's hauntingly lovely features. There would always be those features,

he knew.

Koryl came back into focus. To cover up his hesitation, he rubbed a hand wearily over his forehead.

"You have offered me a great honor," he told her. "But right now I'm hardly in a condition to take advantage of it. What I want most of all is a chance to rest."

"I understand," Koryl said quickly, though a faint shadow of disappointment touched her face. "I shall have servants take you to your chamber at once. And your friend also. Rest well, Rick Stacey."

Back in his and Tobin's room, with the other sprawled in slumber upon one of the couches, full realization came to Stacey of what his fight with Zarduc had accomplished. It had made him more deeply entangled with Koryl than ever. To keep her at a distance now would be difficult. And if she awoke too quickly to the fact that Stacey had no actual interest in her, the results would be disastrous as concerned his plans for escaping.

HE THOUGHT desperately of Parn and Trek. They offered his only hope of getting into contact with the people of Lower Olin—especially with Jendon. It seemed a frail hope at present, but it was the only hope he had. He could think of nothing else that would enable him to flee Upper Olin and free Verla without the Gorgon's interference. This last led up to what was perhaps the greatest uncertainty of all.

Had Jendon made any progress with the idea which Verla had said would somehow overcome the Gorgon's superhuman abilities?

The question remained unanswered in the days that passed. Stacey, however, was given little time to think of it. Each day was filled with a constant

round of activities. He went sight-seeing about Upper Olin with Koryl, Tobin, and a group of others, sometimes afoot, clad in the transparent protective suits, and more often in the bubble ships. On these latter occasions desperate thoughts of seizing control had come to Stacey. He still had his automatic, as did Tobin. But the Gorgon was always in close attendance. He remembered all too well his first attempt to use his gun on the monster, which had resulted in his becoming a captive in the pillar.

A variety of sports and games filled in the other hours. Both men and women took part in most of these. Some were as innocuous as cards or table tennis, others as strenuous as football or basketball, requiring strength and endurance. There were contests with weapons in which only slaves took part, fighting to the death of one or both. Stacey knew that the men selected were forced to participate under the threat of greater hurt. He could only watch in helpless fury, feeling his disgust with the degenerate, pleasure-mad life of Upper Olin reach a sickening depth.

Duels between Koryl's nobles otherwise filled in the program—duels, Stacey found to his surprise, often participated in by women also. These were frequently grim and bloody affairs, and the more grim and bloody the greater was the delight of the spectators.

Once Stacey attended a ceremony of worship involving the Gorgon. This took place in a vast chamber on one of the floors of the palace just below the ice level, which had been fitted up as a temple. Lighted by only a few widely spaced atom torches, the chamber was filled with weird shadows. In one of the walls, covering a circular space roughly seven feet across, was some-

thing which to Stacey's first glance looked like a window. But it was quite opaque, a pale blue in color, the surface shimmering and pulsing and covered with countless tiny pinpoints of light.

As he gazed at the phenomenon, Stacey had the strange but insistent impression that he looked into a vast distance, world beyond world, to a point where the universe ended and others even more remote and mysterious began. Simultaneously he had a dizzy, confused feeling, as though he were plummeting through endless depths. It was only when he closed his eyes that the feeling left him. Then he knew that he had not looked through a window, but through an opening which led into the unknown extra-dimensional realm from which the Gorgon had come. That was his first glimpse of the gateway. . . .

BEFORE and immediately below the shimmering, pale blue circle in the wall was a waist-high block of carved marble, which was unmistakably an altar. Koryl took her place before this, arms raised high, voicing a quick chant. She wore an elaborate headdress from which fell long folds of some filmy, pale blue material, obviously a symbolic representation of the gateway. Beneath the semi-transparent draperies her perfectly curved and otherwise unadorned figure showed in misty silhouette.

Koryl's chant echoed through the chamber, rising to a climax. Watching, Stacey saw a shadow appear on the shimmering surface of the gateway. The shadow deepened, and then, slowly, as though emerging from some viscous substance, the Gorgon appeared. The monster floated entirely through the opening and hung poised over the altar.

Koryl's voice rose to a try of tri-

umph, then abruptly stilled. She turned, one hand raised in a signal.

Two men in ceremonial robes appeared, carrying between them the bound and writhing body of a young girl. Sobbing hysterically, the girl was placed upon the altar. She tried to roll off, but before she reached the edge, the Gorgon turned its flaming red eyes upon her, and she became utterly motionless.

The assemblage within the temple began straining forward eagerly, their faces lighted with a ghoulish anticipation. The reason became clear to Stacey a moment later. For as the Gorgon gazed down at its victim, it began to emit powerful waves of mental radiation . . . waves that told of a terrible hunger and a cruel gloating. The monster began to —*feed*, sucking the life essence from the body of the girl.

And as it fed the waves of mental radiation grew even stronger, flooding into the minds of its worshipers. Stacey experienced a feeling of dark ecstasy, so intense that it was almost unbearable, sweeping all sanity from his brain. Deep within him he was revolted and sickened, but somehow he could not resist the vast pleasure and delight that poured into him like an electric current.

For long moments it went on, and then the waves diminished in force, leaving behind a deep sense of pleasure and well-being. The Gorgon was finished. . . . It moved slowly, sated, and disappeared into the gateway.

Sanity returned to Stacey. He peered curiously at the body of the girl on the altar. Rage and pity filled him as he saw that it had become strangely shrunken, as though it had been drained, emptied. He knew the girl was dead.

That evening he paced the floor of his and Tobin's chamber angrily.

"What a rotten, nastily perverted kind of existence they lead here!" he told Tobin. "I can't stand any more of it. If something doesn't happen soon, I'm going to blow my top—and most likely it'll be right in front of that she-devil, Koryl. Which'll queer us for good."

Tobin shook his sandy head forebodingly. "I'd been hoping Parn and Trek would show us a way out. But they haven't been around lately. Maybe Koryl or Zarduc suspected they were up to something."

"We're finished if anything has happened to them," Stacey said grimly. "I've stood off Koryl long enough, and I'm pretty certain she's getting ready for a showdown. But whatever happens, I'm not going back to the pillars. I intend to raise plenty of hell before I'm through."

Tobin began a reply, but at that moment a faint, grinding noise sent him and Stacey whirling around in surprise. They were alone in the room, and had been preparing for slumber. The noise told them at once that something unusual was taking place.

A carved panel had opened in one wall. Through the opening stepped . . . Parn!

The youth gestured for silence. "Come with me," he said. "Hurry! Jendon awaits you."

CHAPTER VIII

FOR a moment Stacey stood rooted, an incredulous joy surging through him. Then he rushed forward, grasping Parn's shoulders.

"Jendon! He knows? You got through to him? Where is he?"

"Some distance from here. He has everything in readiness. But you must hurry. We are in danger every second we remain here."

Nodding, Stacey turned swiftly to

Tobin. "Come on, Phil! We've got to get our stuff together."

Short minutes later, Stacey and Tobin followed Parn through the opening. They were in a narrow, musty-smelling passageway between walls, Stacey saw in the light of the glow-tube Parn carried. The passageway led for a short distance before it turned abruptly to the left. The branching passageway was longer. It terminated finally in a small, square room, where, in the floor, was a circular shaft. An elevator platform waited in the shaft, and when Stacey and Tobin stood beside him on the platform, Parn sent it dropping smoothly downward.

Smooth rock walls flashed by. The descent seemed interminable. Then at last the platform slowed and finally stopped.

It was cold at this level. Parn had prepared for it, since he was wearing a transparent covering.

"Do we have any further to go?" Stacey asked impatiently.

Parn nodded. "Jendon could not approach too close to the palace. There was too much danger of being discovered."

"How did you get word to him?"

"Through a messenger who operates in the hidden ways, like those in which we are now. I am one of the agents of Mernos, sending needed information to Lower Olin . . . in short, a spy."

"Who is Mernos?" Stacey asked.

"He is the regent of Lower Olin, ruling in the place of Verla. A wise and kind man. I had no great difficulty in assuring him that you and your companion could be trusted. What won him over was the fact that Verla had already trusted you."

While talking, Parn had kept in motion. He pressed a concealed switch in one of the walls of the room into which they had descended. Another

panel slid open. They crossed a huge chamber that was dark and cold and unfurnished, their way lighted by Parn's glow-tube. The route led through a series of corridors and then through a long tunnel in the ice. At last they came to a flight of steps cut into the ice and leading upward. Quite unexpectedly, Stacey found that he was outside. The ornate tower of the palace was a considerable distance away.

Stacey stiffened in dismay as he saw a bubble ship come soaring toward them several feet above the ice. He began reaching frantically for the pocket in which he had placed his automatic.

"It is Jendon," Parn explained. "He was waiting for us here."

The bubble ship landed, the trio hastily crowding into it. Jendon proved to be a tall old man, white-haired, though straight and vigorous. He greeted Stacey and Tobin warmly, then returned his attention to the controls. Under his manipulations, the bubble ship raced low over the ground until the towers of Olin had begun to fade with distance and the pillars of the Gorgon appeared in the valley ahead. Jendon then turned the controls over to Parn.

"The task before us is to free Verla," he told Stacey. "And we must do this as quickly as possible, lest the Gorgon appear."

"But I thought you were working on something to overcome the monster," Stacey said. "From what I understand of the situation, it isn't possible to rescue anyone from the pillars unless there is a way of preventing the Gorgon's interference."

JENDON smiled. "I have found that way, stranger. But since the creature cannot be killed by any means which we have at present, there is the risk that it will summon help. Freeing Verla from the pillar may take more

time than we will have at our disposal."

Jendon turned to where a number of articles lay on the floor of the bubble ship. He picked up a device roughly two feet across which looked like a shield. The outer side was of smooth, bright metal, polished to a mirror-like surface. The inner side was concave and held in its center a box-like affair of metal, from which numerous wires radiated to a circular helix attached to the inner rim of the device.

"It is with this that I hope to prevent the Gorgon from taking us captive," Jendon explained. "I obtained the idea for it from ancient records describing the apparatus with which an ancestor of Princess Verla defeated the first Gorgon to appear in Olin."

Stacey examined the device curiously. "What will it do?"

"According to the ancient records, it will turn the Gorgon's own mental forces against her, altering and increasing them in such a way that they will be unbearably painful. This is evidently the only method for coping with the Gorgon's terrible powers."

Stacey found himself thinking of the classic Greek myth again. It had distorted the actual facts in many ways, but the part dealing with the mirror-surfaced shield, which Perseus had used in overcoming the Gorgon, had remained close to the truth. Briefly it struck him as incredible that creatures and weapons of legend should come alive in this modern age. But in the next instant his thoughts were once more dominated by the harsh reality of what lay ahead. He asked Jendon:

"Are you certain your device will work?"

The old scientist smiled faintly and shrugged. "That remains to be seen. I have not had time to experiment with it. But I have followed the ancient records carefully. If they are correct

at all, then the device will function as we hope."

"What about Verla? How do you intend to free her?"

"My method is simple. I shall first use vibrations to dissolve the substance of the pillar, much as does the Gorgon herself. These vibrations are produced by an apparatus like that of the weapons used in Olin. No doubt you have seen them."

Stacey nodded quickly. He had learned not long before that the flame-muzzled pistols and rifles so ever-present in Upper Olin operated by releasing vibrations which could stun or kill.

Jendon went on, "Once the pillar has been dissolved, Verla may be released from her paralysis by removing from her body the needle or stinger placed there by the Gorgon. The mere process of removing the stinger, however, will warn the Gorgon of what we are doing. This has been the experience of several unfortunate rescue expeditions in the past. There is some sort of mental bond between the Gorgon and the stingers which it places in the bodies of its victims. Perhaps it is this contact with the Gorgon's mind that keeps them in paralysis. It is a matter which I do not fully understand as yet."

Stacey nodded thoughtfully, recalling his telepathic communication with Verla. Evidently this had been made possible by the presence of the stingers, through their link with the enormous mental forces of the Gorgon.

HE SAW that the bubble ship was now moving among the pillars. The one in which Verla was encased should be at the other end of the valley, near where he and Tobin had landed in the plane. He pointed out directions to Parn. The youth nodded and sent the ship moving more rapidly.

When they reached the approximate

location of Verla's pillar, Stacey ordered Parn to land. He helped Jendon gather up the equipment, then led the way from the ship.

"We must hurry," Jendon said. "Do you know exactly where Verla's pillar is?"

Stacey gestured. "Right here, somewhere. It's on an ice dais, and that should make it easy to find."

He led the way again, searching quickly. Several seconds later he found the ice dais. He stiffened into shocked rigidity, a horrible dismay sweeping like a holocaust through his mind.

The dais was empty. Verla and the pillar were gone.

For a long moment Stacey stood motionless, sagging, mentally and physically numbed. As though from a vast distance, he heard Tobin's exclamation of surprise, followed a moment later by the startled voices of Jendon and Parn as they became aware of what was wrong.

A sudden thought roused Stacey into motion. Perhaps he had made a mistake. Verla may never have been here at all. Her pillar might be on another ice dais not far away.

Frantically, hoping against hope, he began to search once more. Tobin and the others, quickly realizing Stacey's purpose, joined in.

They found nothing. Stacey was forced at last to accept the stark and chilling fact that Verla had vanished.

"Koryl did it—damn her!" he muttered thickly. "She realized I was giving her the run-around, and guessed that Verla was the reason. Or else the Gorgon told her."

"What do you intend to do now?" Jendon asked.

"I'm going back to Upper Olin," Stacey snapped. "I'm going to force Koryl to tell me what she has done with

Verla."

Jendon shook his white locks. "That would not be wise. Koryl will know by now that you have escaped. And when she learns that your motive for doing so was to free Verla, she will be very angry. Koryl does not like to be considered second to another woman, especially by a man in whom she has shown interest—"

Jendon broke off sharply as Parn grasped his shoulder and pointed.

"The Gorgon!" Parn cried. "The Gorgon comes!"

CHAPTER IX

IN THE next instant Stacey saw the monster. It was soaring over the pillars in the distance, approaching in their direction with angry speed. He thought piercingly of the bubble ship. They had been stupid to have moved so far away from it.

"Stand behind me!" Jendon commanded sharply. "Place yourselves behind the shield. Hurry—it is our only hope!"

While Stacey and the others gathered in single file at his back, Jendon lifted the shield-like device defensively before him, touching a switch in the box fastened to the inner side. A faint radiance rose from the helix circling the rim.

Stacey fumbled for his automatic, a hard knot of tension within him. He didn't know if he would get a chance to use the weapon, but he intended to try. Everything depended on Jendon's device, he knew. Would it work? If it didn't, they would be helpless, completely at the Gorgon's mercy.

The creature was close now, descending toward them. Stacey could see the vengeful expression upon its repulsively alien yet somehow beautiful face. It meant business, he knew. Whatever it

had in mind could only have been extremely unpleasant. He fought to steady his automatic, an unbearable tension gripping his body.

And then the Gorgon became aware of Jendon's shield-like device. It came to an abrupt stop, its slit-pupiled eyes narrowing speculatively. For what seemed a long time the monster considered the mirror-bright surface turned toward it. Then, its lips curling in a soundless snarl of contempt and defiance, it began darting forward.

To Stacey it seemed the end. Within instants, he knew, he and the others would be in range of the monster's terrible mental forces.

Closer the Gorgon sped . . . closer. And then, scant yards away, it stopped with bewildering suddenness. It was as though an invisible wall had shot up before the creature, barring its progress.

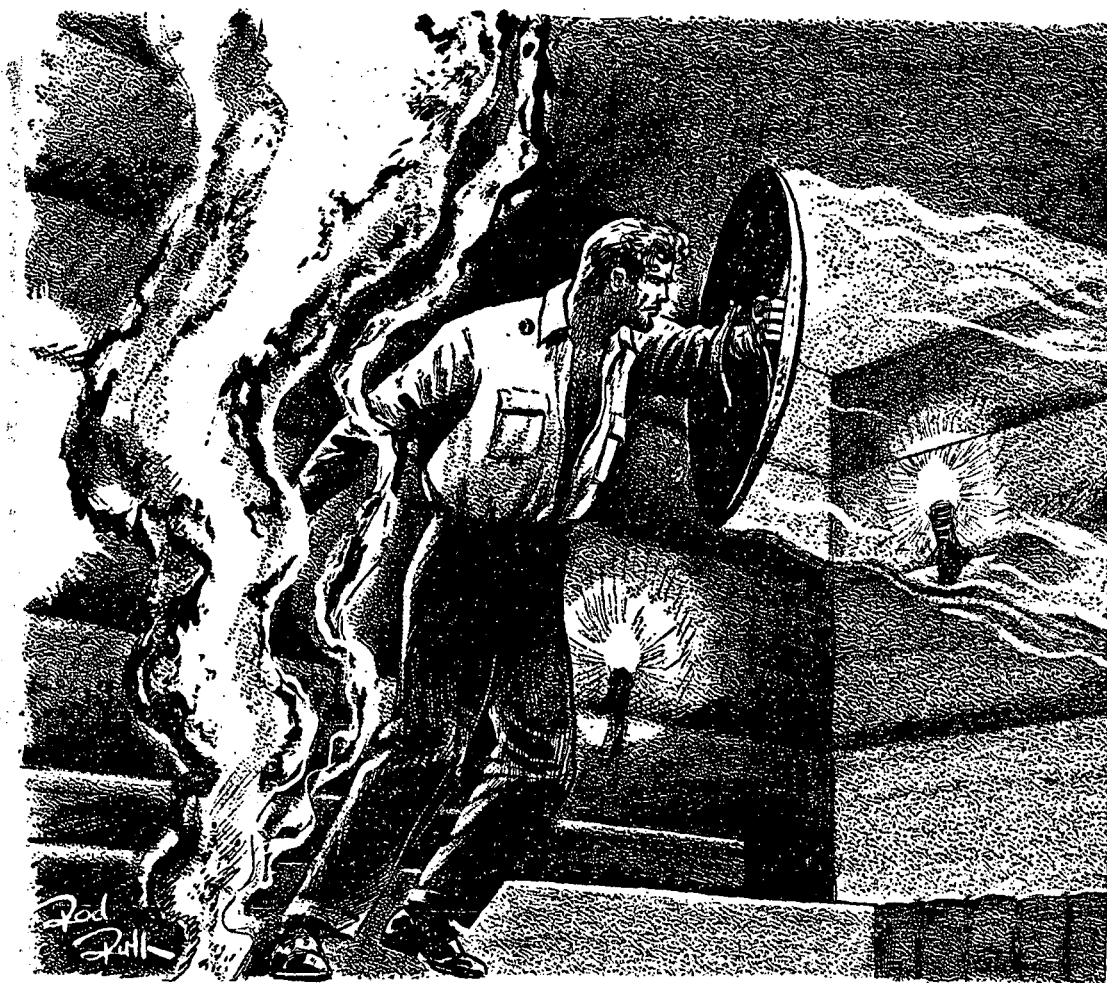
A startled expression replaced the contempt that had been on the huge face. The Gorgon seemed shocked by a sensation it had never experienced before. And that sensation, it swiftly became obvious, was . . . pain.

Features twisted in a grimace of agony, the Gorgon retreated. At a safe distance it considered the group again.

For the first time Stacey became aware that he was not receiving the monster's thoughts. He decided that was due to Jendon's device, reflecting the monster's thoughts back at it, but changed and intensified in such fashion that they were painful.

Without warning, the Gorgon flashed into motion again, sweeping around in an arc, the purpose of which obviously was to attack the group from one side, where it would not be directly confronted by Jendon's device.

Despite his age, Jendon's reactions were still swift. Even as the Gorgon moved, he moved also, swinging the shield around to meet the creature's



Stacey held the shield high and its rays sprang forth . . .

rush. Once again the Gorgon jolted to a stop, agony twisting its face.

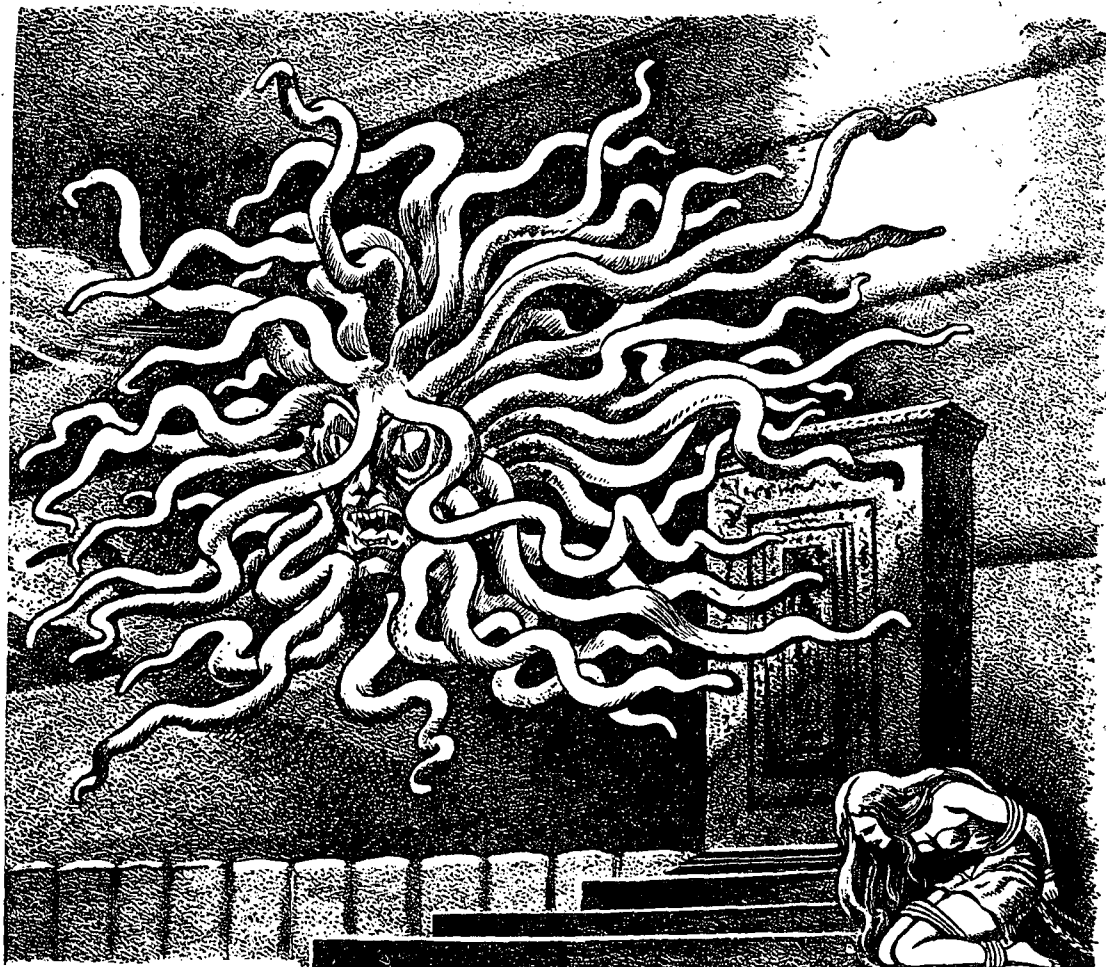
PRESSING forward with the shield, Jendon now attacked. At his first movement the Gorgon jerked backward convulsively, insensate rage and hate boiling into its face. Jendon moved forward more swiftly, following up his advantage. Again the Gorgon retreated, reluctant, raging, but unable to withstand the torture of the shield. Finally it whirled and began racing back toward the towers of Olin.

Stacey gripped Jendon's shoulders in triumph. "It worked!" he cried. "It

worked! We won't have to worry about the Gorgon any more. Anything is possible now!"

Jendon smiled wearily, then quickly sobered. "The Gorgon goes to summon help. We must not remain here, else we shall be caught by Zarduc and his warriors."

They hurried back to where they had left the bubble ship. Parn took over the controls once more, and within moments they were soaring toward the city. At Jendon's directions Parn maneuvered the vessel so as to approach Olin from one side, this being a precaution against discovery by pursuers.



... The Gorgon shrank backward, fury and pain contorting her features

Stacey was torn by conflicting impulses. Despite the victory over the Gorgon, the shock of Verla's loss was still keen. He had a wild urge to confront Koryl and demand to know what she had done with the girl. But at the same time he was aware that the action would most likely be suicidal. And though reluctant, he decided at last that the wisest course would be to return with Jendon to Lower Olin, where he would be able to devise a more effective plan for freeing Verla. He told Jendon of his decision, and the old scientist voiced instant approval.

"It is the best thing to do, Rick

Stacey. You need not fear that Koryl intends immediate harm to Verla. Having Verla in her possession gives Koryl power over you."

Stacey nodded slowly. "That's what I'm afraid of. But if Koryl hurts Verla in any way, I'm going to pull Upper Olin down around that she-devil's ears!"

They reached the outskirts of the city. Parn kept the ship moving low over the ground, taking advantage of the cover provided by the buildings intervening between them and the palace.

Watching the terraces of the distant structure, Stacey saw a number of

bubble ships take off and begin speeding toward the valley. He glanced at Jendon, who had also witnessed the departure of the pursuing ships.

"We must hurry," the old man said. "They will return to search the city immediately upon finding that we have left the valley."

Parn increased the speed of the ship until the ice-buried buildings flashed past in blurred succession. Jendon watched intently. Presently he touched Parn's shoulder and spoke a few words, pointing. Parn nodded and slowed the bubble ship's speed.

Stacey saw that they were in what appeared to be a completely abandoned section of the city. The tops of the buildings which protruded from the snow here were almost all in ruins. As he watched, the ship descended toward a gaping hole in the roof of one of the structures. Darkness swallowed them until Parn touched a switch that sent a broad beam of light ahead of the ship.

Through a series of vast, empty rooms the vessel floated, descending finally through a broad shaft. At the bottom was a long tunnel in the ice. Parn followed this for a time, turning at last into a number of others. Stacey was soon bewildered by the complexity of the network. He was wondering how much longer the trip would continue, when suddenly the bubble ship turned into a tunnel that was brilliantly lighted.

AT THE end of this lighted tunnel a number of men stood guard beside a mounted weapon that looked vaguely like an artillery piece. Jendon identified himself, and the ship was allowed to continue through.

Other lighted tunnels appeared, much larger in size and gradually giving way to a series of low caverns whose roofs were supported by immensely thick

columns of ice. Stacey realized that they were in what was in effect an underground city. Here were the actual streets and lower portions of the buildings of Olin! Numerous people were about, and here and there a bubble ship moved among the columns.

Parn brought their own bubble ship to a stop before a great stone stairway that led up to a pair of huge metal doors, immediately above which the roof of this particular cavern began.

Jendon turned to Stacey and Tobin. "This is the end of our journey for the present. The building before you is the headquarters of Mernos, who, as you perhaps know, is the regent of Lower Olin, ruling in the place of Princess Verla. We will talk with him at once."

As they left the ship, a party of guards hurried toward them down the stairway, weapons held at the ready. Jendon again identified himself, and this time an escort was formed to accompany them into the building.

They were ushered into a large room, which was furnished with an effect of dignified luxury. Mernos was not present, but the captain of the guards left word that the regent would be summoned at once.

Stacey dropped onto a couch, closing his eyes with a sigh of weariness. He found his thoughts running with a kind of dull incredulity over the search for the missing flyers and the almost nightmarish sequence of events that had followed, culminating in his presence here. He wondered what the future held in store, thinking hopelessly of Verla.

The sound of people entering the room brought him erect. Striding forward was a tall, middle-aged man with grizzled hair and a care-worn, patrician face. His robe and decorations indicated that he was someone of importance—obviously Mernos himself. The regent was smiling warmly. Be-

hind him followed a slender, auburn-haired girl, her features pert and vivacious.

Jendon hastened to perform introductions. The newcomer was Mernos, the regent, as Stacey had guessed. The girl proved to be his daughter, Loren. Stacey noticed that Tobin took a vast and immediate interest in the girl, and she, despite her shyness, seemed equally interested.

"Word of you and your companion has reached me," Mernos told Stacey. "I am delighted to meet you and to know that I shall have your aid in what lies ahead. But there are matters that I do not understand. Where is Princess Verla? Did you not succeed in freeing her?"

Stacey explained quickly. When he had finished, Mernos shook his grizzled head in quiet despair.

"The liberation of princess Verla would have meant new hope for Lower Olin. The people have fallen into a state of gloom that is dangerous as regards their resistance to that witch, Koryl."

"The situation isn't entirely hopeless," Stacey returned. "Thanks to Jendon, we now have a means of defense against the Gorgon. That will give us an excellent chance to rescue Verla. And further, Jendon's device makes possible for the first time a direct attack upon Koryl."

"Attack!" Mernos' eyes gleamed. "We of Lower Olin had never thought that would be possible. But now that it is, we shall attack! Too long have we run from the Gorgon and Zarduc!"

STACEY launched into a discussion of plans. Everything, he pointed out, depended on Jendon's device. The entire success of any offensive against Koryl depended on equipping the attacking forces with as many of the

shields as possible. Thus manufacture of the shields was to receive first consideration. All available materials and manpower were to be thrown into the task.

"You will be working against a time limit," he told Jendon. "It must be remembered that Koryl will not be idle while we are getting ready. We must do everything we possibly can before she strikes. Verla's life depends on it!"

Jendon nodded gravely. "The shields are not difficult to make, Rick Stacey. I will be able to produce a large number of them in a few days."

"Good!" Stacey turned to Mernos. "The next consideration is men and weapons. How many warriors are there in Lower Olin? What condition are they in?"

The regent said heavily, "We do not have many warriors—not as many as Zarduc has under his command in Upper Olin. There have been serious losses in encounters with Zarduc and the Gorgon. But what we lack in numbers, I think we can make up for in other ways."

The remaining warriors of Lower Olin, Mernos went on to explain, were the product of grim survival, the unfit having been weeded out in past battles. They composed a body of fighters who were, almost without exception, strong, quick, and shrewd. In addition they had been trained constantly for the day when Koryl would make an all-out attempt to conquer Lower Olin.

As equipment the warriors possessed a large number of ancient war machines. There had always been a greater number of these in the lower levels of the city than in that portion where Koryl's rule extended. The scholars of Lower Olin—scholar being synonymous with scientist, Stacey now knew—had been able to put most of the machines into service, which was not true of those who

had chosen to share the pleasure-ridden life of Upper Olin. The machines were powerful, and the warriors had been trained carefully in their operation.

Stacey's eyes were glittering with excitement. As Mernos finished speaking, he rose and began to pace the floor.

"The situation here is a dozen times better than I dared hope it would be! The only thing wrong is that thought of the Gorgon has filled everyone with defeat. But now we have a defense against the monster. Now we can meet Zarduc and Koryl on almost equal terms!"

Stacey whirled back to Mernos. "Your chieftains! I must talk to them. And I must have maps of the city. We'll begin making plans for an attack against Koryl immediately!"

The meeting continued far into the morning. When at last it broke up, the details for an invasion of Upper Olin had been carefully worked out. To the chieftains was left the task of assigning units under their command to certain specific duties.

Only then did Stacey realize how tired he was. He readily accepted Mernos' suggestion that he turn in for a rest. He and Tobin were ushered to a guest room, and within minutes of their arrival, Stacey was sound asleep.

As soon as he awoke, he went to see how Jendon was progressing. A number of the shield-like devices were already under construction in the old scientist's laboratory. With Tobin, Stacey plunged in to help, there being no other matters that required immediate attention.

Toward evening Stacey decided to see Mernos and learn how the other preparations were going. Tobin grasped eagerly at the opportunity to see Loren again. He had spoken of her almost continually since their meeting.

Mernos looked strangely distressed

when Stacey strode into his office. He said slowly, "I have bad news for you, Rick Stacey. Word from Koryl was just brought in by a messenger. Koryl demands that you return to Upper Olin at once—or Verla will be killed."

CHAPTER X

STACEY sighed. "I expected that.

But I had been hoping for a little more time. As it is—" He fell to pacing the floor, running a hand repeatedly through his already disordered hair. Finally he swung back to Mernos.

"We'll have to make serious changes in our plans. Without the time we needed, an entirely new plan will have to be followed. It's delicate, and there's a great risk that it will fail. But there's nothing else to do." He straightened purposefully. "I want another meeting of the chieftains held here right away, so that I can explain the new changes to them. In the meantime, I want word sent to Parn that I need him and that he is to get ready to take me back to Upper Olin."

The emergency conference took place a short time later. Stacey detailed the change in plan made necessary by Koryl's ultimatum. With Parn to guide him, he intended to return through the hidden ways to the palace in Upper Olin. His objective was to take Koryl by surprise and force from her the knowledge of Verla's whereabouts. Freeing the girl, he would turn her over to Parn for conduct to Lower Olin, then attempt to close the gateway, thus killing the Gorgon, or at the very least force the monster into the gateway and keep it there. He would have one of Jendon's shield devices to aid him.

At about this time, the forces of Lower Olin, armed with such shield devices as were ready, were also to enter the palace through the hidden ways, captur-

ing and holding all important positions, while reinforcements arrived by air with war machines to forestall any organized counter-attack by Zarduc and his warriors. The whole thing depended on close co-ordination and timing; and Stacey grimly emphasized this point to his listeners.

With the intermediate details fully mapped out, Stacey was ready to leave. Tobin insisted on accompanying him, but Stacey refused.

"That would be putting all our eggs in one basket, Phil. If I fail, there's no reason why you should also. Besides, I'll work better alone. You can come with the others if you want to. Then you might have a chance to pry me loose from the Gorgon."

Tobin reluctantly gave in. With hurried farewells, Stacey started away. Parn was waiting for him. Pausing only long enough to take along one of Jendon's shield devices, Stacey and the youth climbed into a bubble ship and set out for Upper Olin.

Reaching the surface, Parn guided the ship slowly and carefully toward the palace, moving only a few feet above the ice. Behind the bulk of a partly ruined tower, he finally stopped, settling the craft to the snow. Then he led the way outside, stepping swiftly toward a large slab of marble that lay against a jumble of masonry at the tower's side. He lifted the slab aside, and the steps leading down into the ice tunnel appeared.

Now Stacey and Parn moved more quickly and confidently, retracing the route to the interior of the palace which they had traveled the previous evening. Parn knew of no secret paths leading to Koryl's quarters—these, if they existed, would have been used long before. But Stacey had thought of a plan for reaching Koryl without too much difficulty. This consisted quite simply in overpower-

ing a couple of guards, whose uniforms he and Parn would then don. The disguise would enable them to gain entrance to Koryl's quarters easily enough.

THE opening of a panel brought them at last to an unoccupied room on the floor of the palace where Koryl was located. There were numerous guards in this vicinity, which in one respect ideally suited their purposes.

Parn went to the door in the room, opened it, and peered cautiously into the hall. He turned back to Stacey, nodding.

"Get ready. I will bring two guards in after me. I will be careful that they do not see my face, but the rest of it is up to you."

Stacey gripped the other's arm briefly. "Bring on your guards. You can depend on me."

Parn slipped out into the hall, and Stacey took up a position to one side of the door, gripping his automatic by the barrel. He waited, while aeon-long seconds dragged past and his blood drummed heavily in his veins.

Then he stiffened tensely as quick footsteps sounded in the hall. Parn darted into the room, taking up his position at the side of the door opposite Stacey. Moments later two uniformed figures burst into the room, swords gripped in their hands. The guards were looking around puzzledly as Stacey and Parn leaped at their backs.

It was over in an instant. Pulled to the floor, the guards were stilled by swift, hard blows to the face. They were then stripped of their uniforms and bound securely with braided ropes which formed part of the window hangings of the room.

Donning the uniforms which they had stripped from their victims, Stacey and Parn strode out into the hall.

Stacey had the shield hidden under a cloak, holding the garment in such a way that it would not be noticeable to casual scrutiny that anything was concealed beneath. He and the other walked briskly, giving the appearance of men on an important duty. Fortunately, it was not necessary for them to pass guards at close range. These, however, merely glanced at the familiar uniforms without bothering to identify the wearers. Stacey and his companion reached the door leading into Koryl's quarters without mishap.

Familiar with the layout of the palace, Parn led the way directly to Koryl's private rooms, skirting the outer chambers where servant girls were certain to be present. A narrow hall brought him and Stacey to another door. Parn grasped the handle, listened a moment, then hurled the door open.

Koryl was pacing the floor of a barbarically luxurious sitting room. At their entrance she whirled furiously.

"What is the meaning of this? Why—" Recognizing Stacey and Parn, she broke off, drawing a quick breath in preparation for a scream.

Stacey reached her in a bound, one arm circling her waist, a hand fastening about her throat. He said with deadly softness, "Quiet, Koryl. Giving an alarm will mean your death."

She looked into his grim face and relaxed slowly, biting her lip. "Again you have made a fool of me, Rick Stacey. I had never thought it possible in a man. How did you get here, dressed like this?"

"Never mind, Koryl. The only thing we're going to talk about is Verla. Where are you keeping her?"

"Rick Stacey—look at me! Am I not beautiful? Why is it that you prefer a mere child like Verla to a woman like me?"

Stacey nodded gravely. "You're

beautiful, Koryl—but evil. Verla's sweet and good."

"But she cannot offer you what I can give, Rick Stacey! I offer you power and a life of luxury. And I offer you a love such as few men ever know. You have not yet known my arms, Rick Stacey. Nor is it too late. For a man such as you I am willing to forgive anything."

"It's no good, Koryl," Stacey returned doggedly. "All I'm interested in is Verla. Where is she?"

In Stacey's grasp Koryl's magnificent body grew taut with volcanic rage. "You refuse me? Very well! As for Verla, you shall never know where I have her hidden. You may kill me if you wish—but I shall not tell."

STACEY'S face was pinched and cold.

He shook his head slowly. "No, I won't kill you. That's too good. What I will do is leave you in such a condition that no man will ever look at you again." His fingers tightening on Koryl's throat, shutting off her breath, Stacey whirled to Parn. "Your knife! Give it to me!"

In another whirl of motion, Stacey had Koryl pressed helplessly to the floor, Parn's dagger point against the soft whiteness of her throat. He spoke in a low, oddly remote voice.

"Your hair first, Koryl. Then your face. The scars will not be nice. You will not be able to look at them. No man will be able to look at them."

She spoke with an effort, her green eyes wide. "You . . . you couldn't do it, Rick Stacey! It isn't in you!"

His forearm pressing against her throat, he caught a handful of her golden hair, slipped the edge of the dagger under it, and drew the blade back sharply. The switch of hair came free in his hand.

Koryl gasped.

"Your hair first, Koryl. Like this. Little by little, until it's all gone."

"I . . . I'll tell! Verla's being kept prisoner in a room not far from here. I will lead you to her."

Stacey made no move. He studied Koryl a moment, then smiled a slow, thin smile. He seized another handful of hair—and again the dagger flashed.

He laid the second switch gently beside the first.

A shudder swept Koryl. Something in her face seemed to shatter like fragile glass. She closed her eyes.

"Verla . . . Verla is in the temple."

Stacey straightened triumphantly, snapping quick orders at Parn. With makeshift bonds brought by the youth, he bound and gagged Koryl swiftly. She lay without moving, her eyes still closed.

Snatching up his shield and cloak, Stacey started from the room. "The temple, Parn! Hurry. This is too good to last."

Another brisk walk through the halls, another pretense of important duty. An elevator platform took them down to the floor of the building where the temple was situated. There were no guards here.

In a fever of impatience, Stacey ran through the dim and silent halls until the great metal door of the temple appeared. Only then did thought of caution creep into his mind. Slowly now he moved forward. Slowly he swung the door inward.

The shadow-filled expanse of the temple chamber yawned before him, vast, pervaded by a deep and menacing quiet. In the wall the gateway shimmered, bathing the altar below it in waves of pale radiance that was not quite light. At the foot of the altar was a slender, wraith-like form. And in the shadows to one side—

From those shadows the Gorgon

rushed.

A terrible urgency roaring through him, Stacey swung up the shield, feeling frantically for the activating switch. Almost the Gorgon's chill, paralyzing thoughts took grasp of his mind. But in the next instant the faint radiance leaped out from the helix in the rim of the shield, and the Gorgon recoiled as though it had touched fire.

The monster exploded into furious action. Leaping, darting, whirling, it sought with enormous energy and determination to find a weak point in the invisible barrier of the shield. Again and again it flinched from the torturing emanations, but some bleak and desperate will to survival drove it repeatedly to the attack.

STACEY never knew where he summoned the superhuman strength and agility necessary to keep the monster at bay. It was as though the tremendous effort required of him had drawn from the most remote depths of his being powers that he had never known he possessed. He matched the Gorgon's every turn and leap, slowly yet inexorably driving it back and ever back.

He wondered why the Gorgon had chosen to remain in the temple. To keep guard over Verla? But the girl was not as valuable to the creature as that.

There must be something else. Something the Gorgon had wanted to protect above and beyond Verla alone. The gateway? Or possibly—just possibly—the mysterious machinery controlling the gateway?

The Gorgon could not operate this machinery itself. There was too much danger of the gateway closing and severing the precious psychic link between the head and its other components. The Gorgon could only stand guard. Evidently it has guessed that Stacey would

appear.

Renewed energy flowed into Stacey. He fought grimly, with a quiet and relentless savagery. He did not know how much time passed. It might have been minutes, or hours—or years.

Slowly, slowly, the Gorgon weakened from its steady contact with the agonizing radiations of the shield. The fury and determination faded from its alien face. Weariness came—and despair. And . . . defeat. With a final leap that must have drained the monster's final dregs of strength, it darted backward and up, vanishing through the gateway.

"Parn!" Stacey cried urgently. "The shield. Hold it here—like this. Keep watch for your very life."

While the other stood guard with the shield, Stacey hurried toward the altar, pausing only long enough to touch Verla's hair briefly. She was securely tied with smooth, gleaming strands of some material that was evidently produced by the Gorgon. She was awake, smiling tearfully, though she seemed too weak to utter sound.

Stacey fell to examining the altar, a screaming sense of urgency within him. The front of the marble block showed nothing to indicate what he sought. Nor the sides. But at the rear he found worn places along a joint in the stone. He inserted the tips of his fingers, pulled—and the slab came free in his grasp.

Contained in a cavity within the altar was a mass of tubes and intricate wire coils, moving, twinkling, humming with faintly sweet melody. Lips curled in a wolfish grin, Stacey thrust a leg into the cavity.

And kicked.

The twinkling died in a bright flash. The humming rose on a note almost of pain—and faded.

Stacey looked up. The gateway was

gone.

Only then did he return to Verla, cutting loose her bonds. Slowly and gently he gathered her into his arms. It was the first time he had touched her in the physical sense. Time ceased to have any meaning. The temple ceased to exist about him. There was only Verla and the beating of his heart in a vast stillness.

There was that—and then there was Parn's shout of alarm. With the sensation that he was being rudely awakened from a dream, Stacey turned. He saw a woman come leaping into the chamber, hair fluttering behind her in a golden cloud. *Koryll*! And from the doorway at her rear boiled a troop of warriors, swords and vibration pistols glinting in their hands.

For a moment it didn't seem real. Stacey watched as though from a vast distance as the men rushed toward him. Then, belatedly, awareness of danger burst like a signal flare in his mind. He began reaching for his automatic. But hardly had he pulled the gun free when the first wave of human flesh hit him, hurling him back and down.

Fists beat at him. Hands groped and clutched. Repeated surges of pain flashed through him numbingly. The world clouded.

But a trace of reason remained with him. Even before he was hauled at last to his feet, a helpless captive, he was fully aware of the all-embracing extent of the catastrophe.

CHAPTER XI

A FACE took shape out of the turbulent seat of faces around him. Koryl's face. She was smiling with sadistic eagerness.

"So, Rick Stacey! Now it is your turn to know rough treatment. But this is only a small small sample of what

is yet to come. You shall know every possible degree of torment before I am done with you!"

She laughed, the rich contralto tones ringing through the silence of the chamber. "But before I start with you, Rick Stacey, I shall devote my attention to Verla. You would have scarred me—disfigured me! For your intentions, then, Verla shall suffer in kind!"

"Wait!" Stacey gasped in desperation. "Wait, Koryl. Do anything you want with me—but leave Verla out of this."

"Ah! The torment begins!" She laughed again. "Save your breath, Rick Stacey. You will need it soon."

"Koryl!" Stacey said sharply. "Don't you realize what has happened? The Gorgon is gone!"

"Gone!" She whirled to stare at the wall above the altar. Then she ran incredulously toward the altar itself, bending to peer into the cavity in its rear. Very slowly she straightened.

An intangible something formed within the room—a feeling of change . . . of *differentness*.

Koryl said abruptly, "To the men who remain with me, I promise power and glory—and to those who serve me most faithfully, my love!"

That was it, Stacey realized. Koryl had dominated these men through the Gorgon, as she had dominated everyone else. But now the Gorgon was gone. Now she feared revolt.

The warriors glanced at each other, forming sides. Hands began tightening about sword hilt and pistol butt.

Tension built up—

And broke as another group hurried into the chamber. In the lead was Zarduc.

"What goes on here?" he demanded. His pale blue eyes glanced quickly from Stacey to Koryl. Then he looked above Koryl, at the wall where the gateway

had been.

His gaze narrowed. Slowly he began to smile.

"The Gorgon is gone, Koryl?"

"Gone," she said. Her voice was flat.

"Well!" Zarduc said. "Well! How interesting." His smile broadened. He sauntered in elaborate fashion toward Koryl, to stand spread-legged before her, his thumbs hooked in his belt.

"So the Gorgon is gone. Do you know what that means, Koryl?"

"It means nothing, Zarduc!"

THE chieftain shook his red mane gravely. "It means that there is at last an end to your tyranny and high-handedness. For me and a great many others. I loved you, Koryl—but you used that love to make me a fool and a disgrace. Now I know that there is more to a woman than a beautiful face and body. These things you still have—but they no longer mean anything to me."

"You are wrong, Zarduc!" Koryl said softly. "They can mean everything to you. It is not too late." She swayed forward entreatingly, a disarming picture of repentant loveliness. "I, too, have learned a lesson, Zarduc. You must let me prove it to you."

"No," Zarduc said.

Koryl was close to him now. In a blurred flash of motion, she struck. The small dagger leaped from the girdle at her waist—and buried itself to the hilt in Zarduc's broad chest!

"To me!" she cried, stepping back lithely. "To me! Power and glory to my defenders!"

The sides were formed now. Swords flashed, pistol barrels glinted.

The chamber exploded into pandemonium.

Shouting amid the clash of arms, warrior threw himself against warrior in a wild battle for supremacy. Grotesque

shadows gyrated and flickered on the walls of the temple as the struggle raged.

Zarduc had not fallen. With grim, terrible effort he drew the vibration pistol from his belt. Koryl saw his intention. Madly she sought to flee.

Deliberately, almost casually, Zarduc fired.

The invisible beam caught Koryl full in the back. She stopped abruptly, stiffening into a statuesque pose of horror and fright. Then she dropped to the floor. The furiously weaving legs of fighting warriors soon hid her from views.

A moment longer Zarduc stood erect. Then, as two wrestling figures crashed into him, he finally dropped.

An arm about Verla, Stacey watched the wave of battle reach its peak and fall. Only a few struggling groups were soon left.

This was the opportunity Stacey had been waiting for. He gestured to Parn, who was crouching nearby, and gathered Verla into his arms. It was safe to leave the chamber now. The remaining warriors were too wearied, too concerned with coming out alive, to care.

With Verla held close against him, Stacey hurried around the sides of the chamber, toward the door. He stopped in despair as still another group of men appeared.

Then he recognized Tobin and the chieftains of Lower Olin. He sagged in unutterable relief.

It was over.

VERLA put down her goblet and glanced across the table at Stacey. "I had been hoping that you would be able to remain with us in Olin, Rick. But from what you have told me, appears this is something you cannot honorably do."

He nodded reluctantly, and for a mo-

ment the banquet hall faded about him. It had been a fine banquet, vastly more restrained than those that had taken place when Koryl ruled in Upper Olin. He thought of the idyllic days that had passed, and pain came with the realization that they were ending. With Koryl and Zarduc both dead and the Gorgon's menace ended, the warriors of Lower Olin had quickly triumphed. The city was united once more, and Verla reigned in the upper half as of old.

"Phil Tobin and I are still in the service of our own nation," Stacey said. "Duty makes it necessary for us to return." He glanced at Tobin. "Don't you agree, Phil?"

Tobin, who was unashamedly holding hands with Loren, nodded slowly. "We'll have to return, all right. But we'll be back soon enough. They'll send us out with an expedition as soon as we make our report. After all, we're the ones who discovered Olin."

"That brings up a question," Stacey said. "I'm not certain that Verla would care to have the outer world know of Olin."

"Why not?" the girl asked. "We have nothing to hide."

"That's partly the trouble," Stacey answered. "The people of the outer world are not all kind. Many of them are—well, like Koryl and Zarduc were."

Verla shrugged her gleaming shoulders. "If admitting them to Olin brings you back any faster, Rick, I shall bear with them. But they shall have to behave. I shall make it clearly understood that I rule in Olin!"

Mernos and Jendon grinned. Mernos said:

"There is much that you have yet to know about Verla, Rick. One is that she has a very definite will of her own."

"Contact with the outer world would be profitable in many ways," Jendon

put in. "It would do much to complete Olin's rebirth. And I am curious about outer world science. There must be many fascinating things to learn." His eyes glittered.

"So be it!" Stacey said. "The world

shall know of Olin. And Phil and I will be back shortly with an expedition."

"I'll be waiting," Verla said. "For you, Rick, there will always be a place in Olin . . . beside my throne."

THE END

★ GREATEST GADGET ★

By CHARLES RECOUR

IF YOU were to ask a technician, an engineer or a physicist what the most wanted device in the world is today, you might get any number of answers ranging from atom-bomb control to atomic power plants back to radio transmission of power. These are good answers but you might get the same answer from everybody if you waited a while longer and gave them time to think about the question.

The answer to the question, "what is the most needed gadget today?" will probably surprise you. It is simply this—an *electric accumulator*! Why this is so, is not difficult to answer.

Most of the world's work today is done by two types of power plants—either electric power plants or by gasoline or liquid fuel engines. All over the world and especially in the United States there are tens of millions of electric motors doing every sort of task and in all sizes. These motors are connected to huge generators which in turn are run by steam turbines or by water power. The motors are used because they are so efficient. An electric motor is commonly called ninety per cent efficient and its only drawback is that it must be connected to a generator. It is light and easily connected to whatever it powers and it is simply controlled. It is the ideal source of power.

For machines and mechanisms which are not stationary, from automobiles to airplanes, electric motors are not used for power. The reason is obvious. Therefore mobile liquid fuel engines are used. It is probably a surprise but most of the world's horsepower is in the form of these engines. Think of the number of automobiles and planes in the United States alone, plus the large number of stationary power installations driven by these machines. But gasoline and Diesel engines, compared with electric motors, are terribly inefficient and difficult to control. With a gas engine you need gearing and clutches, carburetors, fuel injection, exhaust systems and hundreds of other complexities. Furthermore there is a great amount of noise and vibration. A simple electric motor requires none of these things. All it is, is a rotor spinning between some coils of wires. All the forces involved are invisible, vibrationless and noiseless and many times as efficient. Why, then, are not electric motors used in place of gasoline engines wherever possible? The answer is easily found. There is no way to store

electricity!

That is not quite true. There are two ways but both store at best only minute amounts of electric power—small fractions of the kilowatt hours necessary for even small electric motors. One is the technique of storing electric energy in a condenser in the form of an electric field—the other is the method of storing it in the form of a magnetic field around a coil. At best the quantities are negligible.

Where it is absolutely necessary to have a portable source of electric energy we can go to the storage battery or the dry cell. Neither of these devices can store any great amounts of power.

All machines today that use any kind of power except an electric motor, would automatically employ that device if suitable power sources were available. Therefore, a fortune awaits the man who can build some relatively light, portable gadget, mechanism, or what have you, for the purpose of taking energy from an ordinary electric generator, in large quantities—say thousands of kilowatt hours—and delivering that power to an electric motor. To the man who makes that thing, nothing will be denied. It is more important and desirable than the answer to any other technical problem on earth. The only scientific problem that approaches it in importance is the possibility of the transmission of power by electromagnetic waves which would naturally eliminate much of the need for this sort of apparatus.

We have not the slightest clue to any such gadget at present. All we know is that we'd like a small box, which could be connected to an electric generator, filled with kilowatt hours, and then connected to the electric motors which drive our car. This hypothetical car would have only a small electric motor geared to the wheels. When we'd drive up to the station we'd say "fill 'er up" and the attendant would connect the accumulator to the power lines, and charge us for our kilowatt hours, just as we're charged for gasoline today.

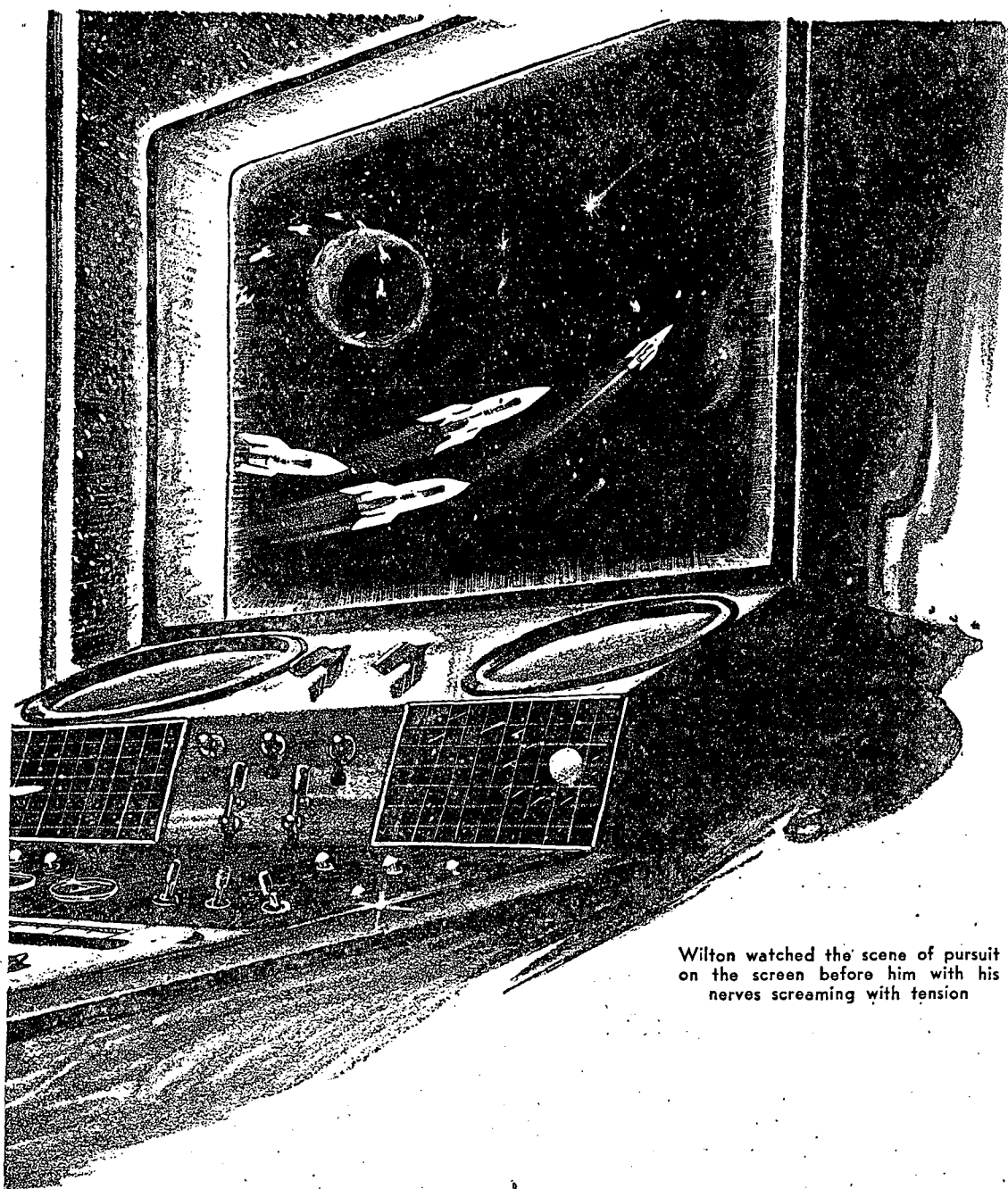
While there is no sign of this wonderful thing in sight, it is possible that some day it will come true. Should such a thing be invented, at one stroke, all gas engines would be obsolete and a new era of power applications would envelop the earth.

THE PIED PIPER OF SPACE

by S. M. TENNESHAW



**Like rats fascinated by the pipes of
a "pied piper of Hamelin" these space ships
followed a mysterious lure to their doom!**



Wilton watched the scene of pursuit on the screen before him with his nerves screaming with tension

LIEUTENANT WILTON, there's hell to pay!" General Richard Galway sat stolidly behind his desk, his ordinarily ruddy features at the moment a curious mixture of green and white.

Lieutenant Sam Wilton took one look

at General Galway's face and said: "Yessir," not knowing what the payment was for.

General Galway fumbled for a cigar and lit up. Puffs of smoke added to the explosive content of his words.

"Wilton, the Venusian fleet is attack-

ing our bases on the Moon!"

"Huh?" Wilton gasped, forgetting to add the customary, *sir*.

The Venusian fleet attacking the Moon!

"And the Earthguard is in the Asteroid belt on maneuvers!" The General exploded. "Luna, in spite of its impregnable defenses, is practically unmanned. To put it bluntly, Lieutenant, we're caught napping!"

Like a meteor tearing out of space, the news hit Sam Wilton. "Good Lord, Sir," he exclaimed, "the Earthguard must be warned at once!"

"That," Galway replied bitterly, "is impossible."

"But—but the televisior . . ."

"The Venusians have every radio televisior set on Earth blanketed out. We are unable to get a message through to the fleet."

Lt. Wilton's mind reeled. Just a few short hours before there had been peace. No thought of war. Now . . . It was impossible to warn the Earthguard of the danger threatening Earth. Just a few short minutes. That was all. And the Solar System was plunging into a bloody chaos. Why? Because Venusians, that sadistic vibratory race of Barbarians were not content to stay in their own back yard.

The thoughts that sped through Sam Wilton's mind were not pleasant. The Venusians would capture the fortified bases on the Moon. From there they would take on an offensive directly against Earth. And Terra would fall before the savage onslaught of Venusian vibrations. Its cities would be devastated. Its peoples massacred. Sam Wilton clenched his fists and demanded harshly:

"But, damn it all, Sir,—isn't there anything we can do?"

General Galway nodded, his features grave.

"There is. That's why I sent for you. The Venusians have a blockade surrounding the Earth, and . . . Someone must run that blockade . . . We've got to get through to the fleet! I know that you and Mona want to get married. Man, here's a chance to prove yourself. I know it's asking a lot of you, but *someone has got to get through!*" General Galway slapped his palm against the desk. His haggard eyes watched Sam Wilton.

Lt. Wilton didn't say anything. He couldn't find anything to say. His mind was in a turmoil. Events had happened with disconcerting rapidity. The glad knowledge that he had gotten the old man's consent to marry his daughter was buried beneath the crushing load of the disaster threatening Earth. Those damned Venusians. Venusians. Over this thought another was struggling to take shape. What was it? . . .

"You'll be taking a tremendous risk," the General broke in on Sam Wilton's thoughts. "I'll not force you to go . . ."

Sam Wilton knew the import of those words. If he didn't go, a task that was almost sure death, he'd be branded a coward, and more than likely lose Mona. If he did go, he . . . He smiled grimly. It would take guts to run that gauntlet.

"Of course I'm going, sir. When do I leave?"

General Galway stood up and crossed around the desk. "Good! We need men with courage now more than ever before. Just remember that you carry the silent prayer of the whole Earth with you. I've had a speedy sub-cruiser made ready. You'll leave at once. And—good luck!"

Lt. Wilton squared his shoulders as he left General Galway's office, knowing that this was both a test and a challenge. A challenge to see what color his insides were and a test to see how

much he could endure. Wilton gripped the General's hand. Then he wheeled about and strode from the room.

AS SAM WILTON reached the ship hangars, he was brought to a stop by the slim figure of a girl. It was Mona Galway. She was, thought Wilton, quite the most tempting morsel his eyes had ever had the pleasure of resting upon. Pert and pretty, with earnest brown eyes and flaxen hair, she stood there before him. A troubled frown clouded the smoothness of her forehead. She said tensely:

"Sam, you've heard about the Venusians? . . ."

He nodded. "Just saw your father. He told me everything."

The girl peered closely at him. "Sam! There's something you're not telling me. I can see by the look on your face. What is it? Has Dad put you up to anything?"

Wilton tried hard to avoid her searching gaze. He felt taut and miserable. Next to the service he loved this girl more than anything else in the world, and for her was going to run a gauntlet of dread Venusian warships. The chances of winning through were slim.

"Tell me, Sam!" Mona demanded, her white face and eyes distended with the fear born of an awful realization. "Tell me!"

Sam Wilton shrugged his shoulders helplessly. "You might as well know," he said. Then he told her of the task confronting him.

The girl's hand went to her throat. "Sam . . ."

"Earth is more important than either of us, Mona," Lt. Wilton replied. "What do we two count balanced against the lives of all the people on Earth?"

The daughter of a soldier, she nodded. But the pain in her eyes gave

the lie to her gesture.

Sam looked at her for a long, aching instant. He wanted terribly to take her in his arms. But he knew it would only add to the pain of what might come later.

"Please be careful, Sam," was all she said. "And, good luck."

Sam Wilton attempted a smile as he left her standing there. It was a poor smile. Not at all the kind of smile he would have liked to present. But it was the best he could manage. Between every thought in his brain arose a haunting visage of a reptilian creature, emanating vibrations, a god-forsaken creation of a being—a Venusian. And his red blood boiled inside him. Savagely he swung back the port of the cruiser awaiting him. Noisily it clanged shut after him.

AS HE neared the outer layers of Earth's atmosphere, Lt. Sam Wilton's eyes narrowed. *He had to win through!* That thought kept hammering in his brain. The fate of Earth hung in the balance. He *must* reach the Earthguard, unsuspecting of the impending tragedy at maneuvers off Saturn and the Asteroid belt.

The little suicide ship was painted a special light absorbing black that made it nearly invisible against the ebony curtain of space. Its dials, meters, and gauges were illuminated only by a dim phosphorescence; and the little glassite-enclosed cabin was totally dark. But Sam Wilton was not fool enough to underestimate the power of his enemy. A frown creased his forehead as he thought of the sensitive instruments the Venusians possessed. Instruments which could register the passage of a pebble-sized meteorite hundreds of miles away. He also knew that the Venusians would be watching those instruments.

His heart singing a song of grim purpose, Lt. Sam Wilton darted through the star-flecked void. Now that the Earth's atmosphere was far behind, he increased the acceleration of his tiny ship. The breath left his lungs under the flattening pressure of the acceleration. Like an arrow released from a cosmic bow, his tiny craft winged through space.

Wilton gripped the controls with a force that whitened his hands. His eyes were burning slits as they raked the blackness of space for the moving pinpoints of light that would mean Venusian warships.

His ship blasted on.

Wilton began to feel confident of success. A song of exultation coursed through his body. He was making it! A grin tugged at the corners of his mouth. Those Venusians weren't so damned smart after all! And then the smile left his face. Two pinpoints of light detached themselves from the fixed brilliancy of the stars, and swerved toward his ship.

Rocket jets! The rocket jets of Venusian warships. They had spotted him!

Grim determination burning within him, Sam Wilton depressed the acceleration lever. Like a beast unleashed the ship darted forward. Down went the acceleration lever. Down. . . .

A signal flare of light from the foremost of the Venusian ships arched across his bows. That was a warning. "To hell with you, you dirty devils!" Sam Wilton ground out from between clenched teeth. Only death would stop him now.

A purple Belden ray sliced under him. Reacting instantly, he shot his ship up and around. The warships grew in size in an instant—and in the next were dwindling. His maneuver had taken place so fast it had caught them flat-footed. Before the Venusians could

swing around and take up the chase from the rear, he was a vanishing dot in the void.

After a few moments Wilton glanced into his rear visor. The two warships were far behind him. His eyes lighted with triumph as he realized he was slowly but surely outdistancing them. Skillfully he blasted power into the port jets to give his ship an erratic, forward course. His ship was a zigzagging target, pulling away.

Behind him the Venusian warships let loose with everything they had. But Sam Wilton laughed. For he knew they were only wasting power.

Abruptly a bright object hurtled across his bows. Only instinctive reaction saved him. He twisted his ship up and out of the way. Looking behind he was chilled to see a large enemy maufer hurtling after him.

Wilton's thoughts reeled. He hadn't won through the blockade at all! He had only penetrated the outer fringes!

His entire body tingled as the tiny ship was caught in the glancing slice of a pale, silver beam. Alarm gripped him. "Paralysis ray!" he choked.

Wildly he sought to hurtle to safety. Even as he threw over the acceleration to the last notch, he knew it was hopeless. Again that silver beam caught and caressed his ship. For an agonizing instant Wilton fought to keep control of his senses. But, crushed by the intolerable weight of 9 g's acceleration, and laboring against the force of the paralysis beam, he sank into inky depths of oblivion.

Sam Wilton lay slumped over the control panel. His tiny ship, unguided, hurtled into the void.

LIEUTENANT SAM WILTON came to with the illusion of being torn to shreds. His head pounded like a rhythmic trip-hammer. He groaned

as memory slowly flooded back.

The Venusian blockade . . . the Earthguard . . . General Galway . . . Mona . . . and then the numbing paralysis when everything went black.

Wilton struggled painfully to his feet. He glanced at the control panel. Good Lord! He had been unconscious for three hours! And all the while the little ship had been hurtling through space at full power!

Anxiously Wilton corrected the erratic course of the little ship and headed for the Asteroid belt.

Another precious hour slipped by before the speedy vessel came in sight of the Earth fleet off Saturn. Wilton made contact.

"Calling Earthguard. Lieutenant Sam Wilton calling Earthguard. Urgent."

There was a click and then:

"Commander Fleming speaking. Go ahead, Lieutenant."

Wilton blurted out the details in short staccato sentences. "I've just come from Earth, sir. The Venusian fleet has mobilized and is attacking Luna. They've blanketed our televisions and we couldn't get through to you. I managed to slip through the blockade but was nipped by a paralysis beam. I've lost three hours getting here. General Galway's orders are that you return to Earth at once. It may be too late already. That is all, sir."

The set clicked off. Through the port viewplate, Wilton could see the huge Earth fleet mass into formation and accelerate toward Earth. In his heart there was a prayer. His receiver clicked:

"Commander Fleming speaking. You will report back to G.H.Q. Lieutenant. Your job is done."

Sam Wilton shot his little cruiser after the wake of the mighty armada. Time alone now stood in the balance.

WHEN the Earthguard reached Luna it was apparent they were too late. Wilton, looking through his viewplate, saw a meager group of Earth ships vainly attempting to attack the Moon. The Venusians had already captured Earth's greatest and most strongly fortified base! Sam Wilton's heart contracted.

He was too late. Cursing savagely he switched on the radio televisior. The Venusian blanket had been removed. It had served its purpose. He connected with General Galway.

"Lieutenant Wilton reporting, sir. The Earthguard has arrived."

General Galway bit out harshly. "I can see that. They've arrived all right—four hours too late! Land immediately, Lieutenant, and consider yourself under arrest!"

The set switched off with an abrupt click. Sam Wilton cursed vainly to himself. Hell! How could he explain what had happened? A lot of good it would do now—the damage was done. Wearily he turned his ship toward Earth.

* * *

A special detail was waiting for him when he landed. Courteously, but with the realization that he was under guard, he was taken to General Galway's headquarters. Mona was there.

"Well?" snapped General Galway, from behind his desk. "What is your explanation? We saw you break through the Venusian line. You should have been back with the fleet four hours ago. Because you weren't the enemy captured the Lunar forts without a struggle!"

Wilton looked helplessly about him. He knew he was responsible for what had happened, but he also knew he couldn't help it. Mona looked away.

"I—I'm sorry sir. But when I broke through the Venusian line they trained

a paralysis beam on me—and I passed out. When I came to, three hours had passed. I headed right for the fleet. But I was too late.” His voice trailed off. What was the use? The damage was done. Those words kept ringing in his brain.

Mona stepped beside him.

“I knew there was some reason Sam didn’t come back, dad,” she said defensively. “Sam couldn’t help being caught by the ray—why it’s a miracle he even managed to break the blockade! As it is, at least we’ve got the fleet here.”

General Galway turned his haggard eyes aside. The past few hours had wrought havoc on his nerves. His shoulders sagged and his hands lay limp upon the desk. He was at the end of his resources. He groaned:

“If only there was something we could do . . .”

Yes, if there was only something. Wilton ground his teeth in desperation. There must be a way out. There must be. His head rang with the thought. It was almost as if a vibration were repeating over and over again the same words. A vibration. . . . And then suddenly Sam Wilton straightened. A glint entered his eyes. By heaven! Something he had been trying to think of all day had come to the fore in his mind. It was wild, impossible, insane, but it was a thought! There was a tense eagerness in Sam Wilton’s voice as he faced his superior.

“General Galway!”

The General looked up.

“Sir, we’re in a bad fix—we all realize that. Something must be done and done quickly. The Venusians have the Moon, and if we don’t stop them soon, they’ll have Earth as well. Our fleet is about as good as a bunch of flyswatters when it comes to taking back the Lunar forts. Sir, I believe I’ve got an idea that might

work. It’s a slim chance, but anything is worth trying right now.”

THE WEARINESS momentarily left General Galway’s features. “Well? What is it? Speak up, man!”

Sam Wilton smiled. “I’m sorry, sir, but if I told you you’d think I were insane—and you might be right at that. But, are there any laboratory ships at G.H.Q.?”

General Galway frowned. “Yes. But why?”

“Well, sir,” Wilton said anxiously, “I want to borrow one of them for a while. If the idea I’ve got works, I’ll be back in a few hours. If not . . .”

General Galway’s frown deepened. “Lieutenant, you are technically under arrest. By military regulations you should be interned as soon as you leave this office. Now you want the use of a laboratory ship, without telling for what purpose or end. Under ordinary circumstances I would laugh at such a request. But this, unfortunately is no ordinary circumstance. Earth is threatened. Threatened as she has never been before. Something must be done. You say you have a plan . . .” General Galway groaned inwardly. What to do?

“Let him try, dad! Give Sam a chance—after all, what can we lose?” Mona Galway slipped her arm through Sam Wilton’s. General Galway looked up. Yes. What *could* they lose?

“Please, sir, I know it’s asking a lot, but I only need a few hours. If I fail we won’t be any worse off . . .” Sam Wilton’s voice trailed off. General Galway came to an abrupt decision.

“All right, Lieutenant,” he said hoarsely, “your arrest is suspended. There’s a laboratory ship in the West hangars. I don’t know what you’ve got on your mind, but I hope—to God it succeeds.”

Sam Wilton saluted. In his heart he

said: "I hope to God it does too, sir." But when he spoke, the words were different. "It's got to be good, sir. And it will!"

A grim smile on his face, Sam Wilton turned and strode from the room.

THE HUGE bulk of an Earthguard laboratory ship stood out in space. Lieutenant Sam Wilton, at the controls, peered anxiously toward the Moon. What he saw was not a pleasant sight.

A huge fleet of Venusian battleships huddled on the Lunar surface, protected by the giant Lunar fortresses. The enemy fleet resembled tiers of waiting vultures. Waiting to swoop down upon their prey.

Around Luna, standing off at more than a thousand miles, was the helpless Earth fleet. Waiting. That was all they could do. To storm the Moon would mean instant disaster. Earth had fortified Luna against all attack as long as there was a fleet on its surface to help. There was a fleet there now. But it wasn't of Earth.

Sweat beaded Sam Wilton's brow. The moment was close at hand. Two hours had elapsed since he left General Galway at G.H.Q. on Earth. Two hours in which he had been exceedingly active. With each passing second now, his huge ship drew closer to the Moon.

And then the moment came. Lieut. Sam Wilton pressed a small button beside him. The hum of machinery rose from within the bowels of his ship. Suddenly something shot from its side. Sam watched as the sleek shape of an auxiliary unit forged ahead of the ship. He relaxed. It was now out of his hands . . .

* * *

Gery Vargh, Commander of the Venusian Campaign Fleet, sat in the control room of his flagship on the Lunar surface. His staff surrounded him,

eagerly awaiting his orders. Low vibrations stirred the air of the control room. Vibrations that emanated from the Venusians themselves. It was a part of their being, vibrations. Low, dull, throbbing sounds.

Gery Vargh gazed on the vast fleet that would soon annihilate the forces of the Earth. This surprise attack had been masterly executed. His eyes strayed to the impregnable Lunar fortresses. The moment of victory was at hand. He reached out and switched on the televisior set. Every ship would be tuned in to receive final instructions. The Venusian Commander smiled to himself and prepared to speak the words that would launch death and destruction upon the helpless peoples of the Earth.

But Gery Vargh never spoke.

Out of the televisior came a sound. It was a series of sounds. It was a swelling, voluminous combination of sounds. Sounds that froze every Venusian rigid. They stared. They stared unseeing. The sounds grew.

It was a conglomeration of sound beyond the fringe of music. It was weird, ethereal, fascinating. The Venusians, their own vibrations dimmed in comparison, strained toward the sounds issuing from the televisior. Their faces became transfixed into masks of ecstasy. Hypnotic ecstasy that knew no bounds. There was eagerness in their eyes. Eagerness to possess that sound. Possess it above all else.

Faintly at first, but gradually, the sounds receded. The Venusian Commander, straining his every sense, gazed into the viewplate. He saw a tiny ship rocketing outward in space. And with that ship the sound followed. The Venusian Commander pushed to the controls of his flagship in a daze. There was a mechanical eagerness about him. There was ecstasy in his eyes . . .

SAM WILTON watched from the control room of his ship. He watched as the little auxiliary ship rocketed off into space. Then he watched the surface of the Moon. His heart stood still for the space of a few seconds. Then suddenly he tensed.

A ship took off. It was the Flagship! Another followed. Another, and another. In the space of seconds the sky was filled with ships. They sped into space after the fleeting shape of the little dot that dwindled in the void. It was like a vast exodus, unseeing, uncaring, but spurred onward by some incomprehensible urge. Sam Wilton's heart leapt at the sight of it. The Venusian fleet! The entire fleet that had only a few moments before been about to tear down upon Earth—was gone! Gone into space . . .

* * *

General Richard Galway sat in his private office at G.H.Q. on Earth, lighting a cigar. Mona stood silently beside him. Lieutenant Sam Wilton, surrounded by jubilant officers, entered. There was momentary silence.

"Lieutenant," General Galway began, clearing his throat. "Needless to say what has happened is a miracle. That you are responsible for it cannot be denied. But what I can't understand is why you wanted a laboratory ship?"

Sam Wilton smiled. "There really isn't much to explain, sir. I just happened to remember something a few hours ago that I'd been trying to think of all day. If you recall, sir, our psychologists have written a great deal about the Venusian race. In particular their uncanny susceptibility to vibra-

tion. It seems that their life force is based on certain ranges of vibration in the lower half of the musical scale. And that tones and vibrations of the upper half affect them strangely, attracting them,* like moths to a flame.

"This led me to believe, sir, that if the vibrations moved, the Venusians would follow them blindly and unquestioningly. I merely constructed a crude musical vibration transmitter, adjusted it to transmit a continuous combination of sounds to which I knew the Venusians were susceptible, and mounted it in an auxiliary unit of the ship. Since the enemy had their television sets open to receive instructions, they were certain to receive the vibrations. They did. You know the rest for yourself. They went after that auxiliary ship like bears after honey. By now I'll wager they're near Arcturus and still going!"

The officers, grinning in admiration, pumped Sam's hand and departed. There was work to be done yet.

General Galway rose from behind his desk. "It begins to look like the wrong man's been sitting here, Wilton. Needless to say, I'm proud of what you've done. Everyone is. And now," General Galway frowned.

Sam had gone over to where Mona stood. He wasn't listening. General Galway coughed.

"You two could at least have waited until I left the room!" he remarked.

* It is a recognized scientific fact that certain ranges of musical tones, if repeated constantly under certain conditions, can, and do produce hypnosis. They dull, or deaden the brain reflexes and cause the senses to lax. A person under such a spell of hypnosis may be prompted to do things of which he is unaware, until the hypnotic effect is broken.—ED.

COMING NEXT MONTH

"TITAN'S DAUGHTER"

Sequel to "GODS OF VENUS" By Richard S. Shaver



ZENO'S CLASSICS

THE story is told of a visit by the Eleatic Philosophers Zeno and Parmenides to the College at Athens. The Sophists, who were the orthodox thinkers of the day, had put little faith in the words of these two from the lowly city of Elea. However, much to their disliking, this visit was to upbraid many of their arguments which till then were unquestioned.

In the course of debate Zeno posed problems which today have become classics in the field of mathematics. More commonly they are known as "Zeno's Paradoxes." Popular interpretation of the four are sometimes reduced to the following two. Dissatisfied with the explanation of motion Zeno posed his problem under the guise of a theoretical race between Achilles and a tortoise. The contest was so arranged, figuratively, that Achilles was to begin running when the tortoise had passed his handicap distance, whatever it might be. Due to

the fact that there was no relation between the mathematical and physical concepts Zeno's conclusion, theoretically, was as follows: Achilles would never overtake the tortoise since he would always pass to a point at which the slower tortoise had already been and consequently the slower must always be more or less in advance.

His second paradox dealt with the motion, or rather lack of motion, using the flight of an arrow. In essence it was things behaving in a uniform manner are either at rest or in motion. If the arrow can be shown to be at a certain point at a definite instant then the arrow is not in motion at all.

These have concerned mathematicians for ages past and present and it was from the implications of Zeno's Paradoxes that the later important study of infinitesimal analysis was evolved.

Robert N. Carter

ASTROGATION

EVERYONE knows now that it isn't going to be a very long time before a rocket is going to be sent to the Moon. It will probably come within the next five or ten years. The most experienced of the captured German rocket experts say that given sufficient money, it could have been done before this. From the first Moon-rocket, it is but a step—a long one, it's true, but still a step—to the planets, almost without question first Mars or Venus.

In going to the Moon, a mere quarter of a million miles away, the problem of astronomical navigation or "astrogation" as it is logically called, doesn't seem to be very great. The Moon is such a close, big object that guiding ourselves to it is simple. But what about Mars or Venus?

The problem here is not as great as may be imagined either. To begin with, almost all of the necessary mathematical calculations for such a journey have been made. In fact these have been worked out as an exercise by a number of competent astronomers, and with the assurance that the rocket can be guided in its course, the desired goal can be reached.

Suppose that a rocket has been launched to Mars. It will have been carefully sent along a pre-calculated trajectory so that it may traverse the greatest part of its journey on inertia so as not to consume excessive amounts of fuel. But it will be impossible to do this perfectly. During the flight and the deceleration, the rockets will have to be used, both to correct any slight errors in direction and in velocity.

This means that measurements with instruments for navigation—oops!—astrogation—will have to be made. Obviously there will be no linear measurements involved. All measurements will be angular. And conventional angular measuring in-

struments like sextants and octants now used for navigation will be suitable for coarse approximations. For more refined work in measuring the necessarily minute angular quantities, refinements of these gadgets will be used. Modern industry and science fortunately have provided us with measuring tools usually far more accurate and durable than we normally need. This margin of quality assures our success.

WHAT will be a suitable reference point? That's no problem. We have any number of those. Above all, relative to our Solar System, the sun itself, will make an excellent anchor point. Angular measurements will be made with respect to it. However another point is required in order to determine a plane—in fact two more points are necessary. They've already been determined—the plane of the ecliptic is the answer—it is the plane of the Earth's orbit around the Sun. Our knowledge and recorded measurements of this are quite precise even from our observations here on Earth. It will be quite suitable as a reference plane.

Distance from the Sun, another desired astro-gational necessity, can easily be determined by accurately measuring the apparent angular dimension of the Sun. This is similar to telling how far we are from a ship by measuring its angular size on the horizon, previously knowing its length.

From this it can be seen that to a great extent any worry of not knowing where we are in our rocket ship, may be dismissed as foundationless. The only problem that confronts us today is the rough one of fuel. We haven't yet gotten the proper fuels for interplanetary work. Maybe more work with the atom will . . .

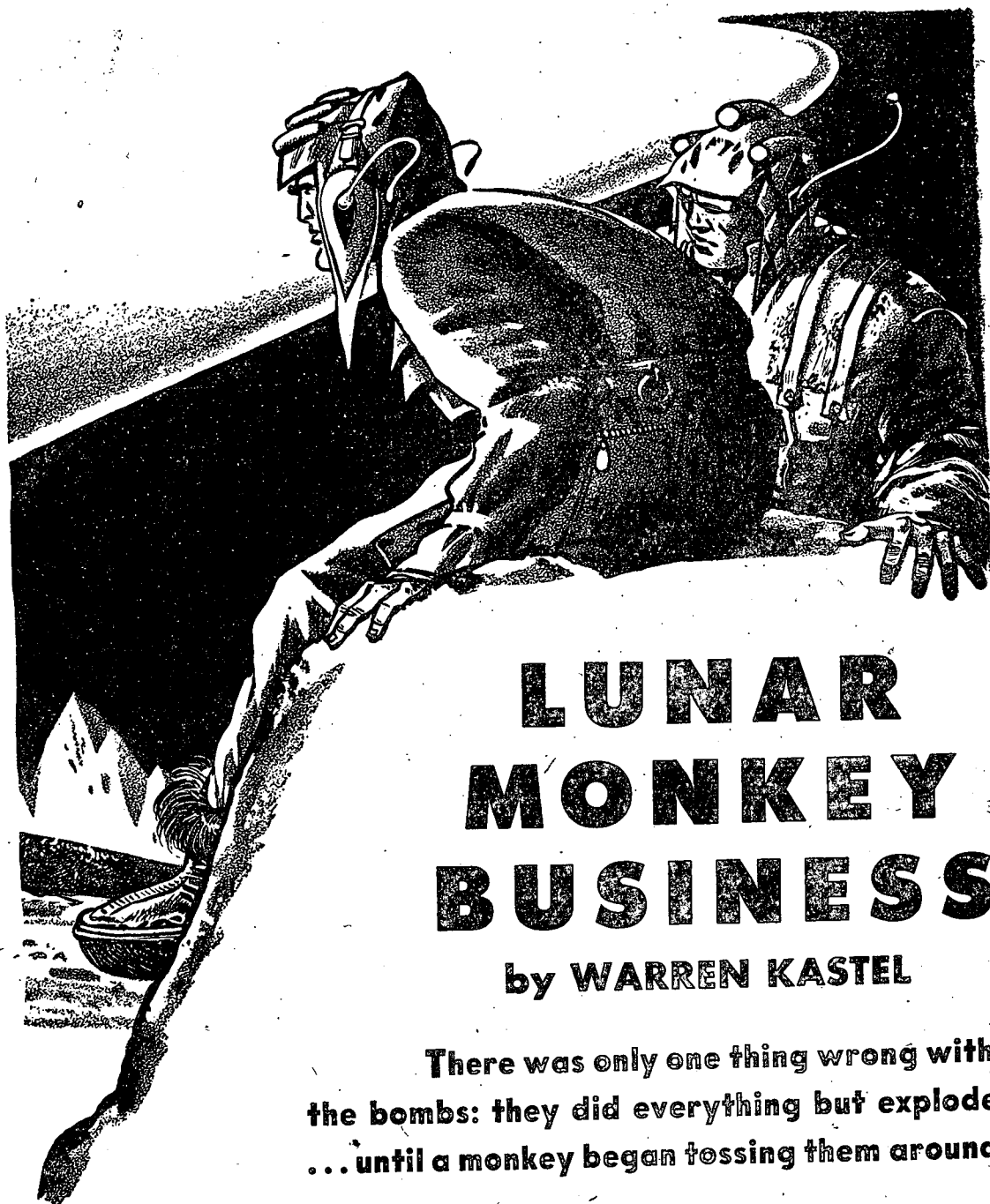
Ferdinand Workman



The monkey screamed and chattered, brandishing the bombs menacingly

SOMETHING was pulling at my hair. I had been catching a few minutes sleep in the cubbyhole which was meant to be an officer's quarters on a first line cruiser of the Solar Patrol, and was quite content to lay

there dreaming. It isn't often I get a dream I can really enjoy, but this dream concerned a cute little blond number I had met on Mars a few months back. Those were days when a guy could really enjoy himself, and



LUNAR MONKEY BUSINESS

by WARREN KASTEL

**There was only one thing wrong with
the bombs: they did everything but explode
...until a monkey began tossing them around**

when there was some sense to polishing the brass buttons on your uniform so that the girls could get an eyeful of your rank. But as I said, that was a few months back, before I got put on special assignments duty by General

Headquarters.

Ever since, I've been pounding all over the system on monotonous jobs with little or no time for recreation. Especially where women are concerned. Course I've had Joe and Fifi with me,

and things haven't been too dull. They never get too dull when Joe and Fifi are around.

Joe isn't crazy, he just has an obsession. He's all the time puttering around with chemicals. Thinks he's going to make some big discovery some day. Maybe he will, but more likely he'll wake up some fine morning and find he's went and blew himself to pieces. Like the time we were chasing Blacky Jackson out on Pluto. Joe wanted to bring home a hunk of the rainbow quartz that Pluto is full of. Well Joe went and planted some stuff he had made with his chemicals under a ledge of the rainbow quartz—when I had my back turned, and bam! The next thing I knew the whole damned ledge of rock was flying around my ears and to make matters worse the concussion started a landslide. Well, if we hadn't done some mighty tall stepping there for a few seconds it would have been curtains sure. And then there was the time Joe—but heck! why go into detail. Joe really don't mean any harm, he's just got a bug in him that makes him want to do screwy things. But I couldn't get along without Joe, nutty ideas, or not. He's as much a part of me as my pants. Well, maybe not that much.

Then there's Fifi, Joe's Venusian Monkey. Fifi is really an intelligent animal. She can light a cigarette for you, open doors, pick locks, and a lot of other things Joe taught her. But she's a darned nuisance sometimes. Like now, waking me up from the dream I was enjoying, yanking mightily at my hair and screaming like a banshee gone berserk.

For a couple of seconds I couldn't get my bearings, I still thought I was on Mars with that cute little blond. But when I sat up suddenly and my head hit the roof of the bunk, I re-

membered I was on the Moon in a Patrol ship. We—Joe, Fifi, and I had been put on one of those experimental assignments. This time H.Q. had a new secret weapon they were going to try out on the Lunar mountains. It was supposed to be the last word in rays. The guy who invented it claimed it turned whatever it hit into just plain atoms. Disintegration, I guess they call it. Well, we were already at the Moon, waiting for the Big Guns from G.H.Q. to show up, which should have been at any time now. And then Joe and I were supposed to aim the projector at one of the mountains and let her go. Naturally the Big Guns would stay in their own ship, no sense in them getting killed too if the thing didn't work right. . . .

Well, as I said, I was catching a few winks before the staff ship from Earth came along, and was enjoying myself on Mars with that luscious little blond, when Fifi came along and pulled my hair to beat heck! I shoved her away roughly, growling.

"What the heck do you think you're doing!"

She came right back at me, but this time she didn't yank my hair. She grabbed my foot and tried to pull me out of the bunk. Then I tumbled. She was trying to tell me something. Something was wrong! I jumped out of the bunk and pulled on my boots, a hundred fears jumping into my mind at the same time. Mainly I thought about Blacky Jackson and his cut throat gang of pirates. Could it be he was attacking us? If a guy like Blacky Jackson ever got hold of the Disintegrator beam it would be too bad for the patrol.

NOT stopping to lace my boots I dashed from the room and hurried up the long corridor towards the Control room. The door was open. Fifi

jumped on my shoulder and continued to screech into my ears. I yanked her off as I entered the control room, fearful lest she get to playing with my scalp again. Inside the control room I stopped dead staring. Joe lay over in the far corner of the room, a pile of debris scattered around him with his face covered with blood. I yelled.

"Joe! What's happened!"

He didn't answer. I leapt forward and knelt beside him. My hands shook as I wiped the blood from his face. And then I swore. It wasn't blood, his face was covered with pulp of a ripe tomato! I shook him until his teeth chattered. Finally he came to.

"Well what the heck've you been up to now!" I demanded hotly. This was no time for Joe to be experimenting, with the G.H.Q. staff coming along any minute. He smiled weakly and climbed to his feet.

"It worked!" he said jubilantly.

"That's quite apparent!" I growled. "What were you trying to do—scare me out of my wits? For a few seconds there I thought you were dead!" I was going to add—"and almost wished you were"—but thought better of it. Joe looked so pathetic with tomato plastered all over his homely mug, and juice running down into his neck.

"I've made a new kind of grenade." Joe explained.

"What! Out of tomatoes?" I thundered.

"Yes, out of tomatoes!" Joe retorted. "Nobody would ever expect to find a tomato anything but something to eat. And I figured if I could make a bomb out of a tomato no one would ever suspect it. We can leave them laying around and if we ever need a weapon in a hurry—we've got one!" He beamed triumphantly. Then wiped the tomato from his face sheepishly. "Fifi did this," he said meekly,

"grabbed one of my bombs when I wasn't looking and threw it at my head! If I hadn't ducked I'd have got it good, as it is I only got the tomato when it hit the wall."

Honestly, if ever I came close to believing Joe was cracked, it was at that moment. Making bombs out of tomatoes! But that was Joe all over. I might have hauled one off his thick skull right then if I hadn't looked at the viewplate. A ship was landing on the Lunar surface!

"Get this mess cleaned up pronto," I snapped. "H.Q. has landed outside, they'll be over here in a few minutes."

Joe looked hurt but he gathered together the mess he had made and threw it into the refuse lock.

"What about these?" I asked, pointing to five ripe tomatoes on a shelf in the corner, "am I supposed to eat them!"

Joe grinned. "You better not if you know what's good for your digestion."

I gave up in disgust and quickly set the control room in as good order as was possible. Already five spacesuit-clad figures were making their way towards our ship. That was peculiar, I thought, unless H.Q. had changed its mind. I thought there would only be three officers.

GRABBING Fifi by the neck I made my way to the airlocks. Well, the big moment was at hand. If the gun worked I'd probably get a nice long leave of absence, if it didn't I'd get six feet of ground. Air hissed as the outer lock opened and closed. Then the inner door opened and I stood facing five wicked looking proton guns! I dropped Fifi to the floor in my astonishment. Then I noticed a face peering gloatingly from behind a space helmet. Blacky Jackson! The most notorious renegade in the Solar System with the

pick of his pirate crew! It was preposterous—but darn it, it was true. I could only stare and gape. The pirates removed their cumbersome space suits one at a time, keeping care that I was always covered. Then:

"Hello, Lieutenant, we meet again!" Blacky Jackson sneered, but I ignored him. "Am I in time for the party?" he asked.

"Go to hell!" I answered. "Since when do pirates come riding to the moon in Patrol Staff ships?"

Jackson smiled. "Oh, that! Er—I had to persuade your Commanding Officers to see my point of view—surprise attack, you know."

Yes, I knew. Blacky Jackson was famous for his methods of dropping out of the skies when you least expected him. And he usually got the drop on you. But how the heck he ever got command of the Staff ship was beyond me. Just then Joe edged around the corridor. He had managed to make himself presentable in the few minutes that had passed. He stopped dead when he saw Jackson, and his jaw dropped in amazement. Fifi scurried onto Joe's shoulder and chattered incessantly.

Jackson grunted, "Shut that darn ape up. He annoys me!"

"Shut up yourself," Joe retorted, "and besides he's a she." Fifi gave Jackson a dirty look as if she understood what had been said. I sometimes wondered about Fifi, some of the things she did were darned intelligent.

Jackson's men crowded around us. Shoved us back down the corridor into the control room and against a wall to one side of the control panel. Jackson looked eagerly about. Then he spied the massive shape of the Patrol's newest weapon set in the center of the hull.

"Ah!" He said, and turned triumphantly. "We'll see how smart your Pa-

trol is from now on!"

"You'll never get away with this, Jackson!" Joe said. There was something in his voice which made me look at him queerly. It was as if he knew something, and was enjoying the knowledge that he alone knew it.

"Oh, no?" Jackson sneered. "Well, there's one thing sure, you're not going to get away from here!"

"What do you mean?" I demanded, knowing very well what he meant. The darned pirate never left any witnesses. Dead men tell no tales was his motto.

"I mean," gloated the pirate, "that when I leave here there won't be enough left of you to spit at! For the first thing I'm going to try this gun out on is you!"

I gulped. I hadn't figured on that. But Joe began to whistle. This got me mad. It was bad enough that the worst pirate in the system had captured the deadliest weapon ever to be invented, and on top of that to make us the Guinea-pigs for the test. But here was Joe, rolling his eyes nonchalantly around the ceiling and whistling. This convinced me. Joe must be nuts. I guess Jackson figured the same.

"You won't be whistling very long once I get this disintegrating beam trained on you," he grunted. Then he motioned to some of his men. They herded me and Joe from the control room and back to the airlocks. There they gave us two space suits and making sure we were properly covered by proton guns, bade us put them on. We did.

JACKSON came swaggering up. Behind him I could see into the control room and I noticed that he had already switched on the controls of the big gun. I could see the tungsten filaments in its base begin to heat up. When those filaments got white hot the gun

would be ready. Oddly I noticed something else too. There was the sound of faint hissing. Joe noticed it too and I caught the faintest gleam of satisfaction in his eyes. He was holding something back from me alright. Just then Fifi came bounding up. She jumped on Joe's shoulder and began to chatter in his ear. Joe chattered back at her like he was crazy. Then he rubbed her fuzzy head.

"Take care of Fifi for me, Jackson," he said.

"Ummf," growled the pirate. "I'm gonna pitch that ape out at the first jungle I come to!" Obviously he thought the crack was funny for he burst into laughter. Fifi gave him another dirty look, even dirtier than before, and again I wondered about that darn little animal. Either Fifi actually knew what was going on, or else I was imagining things. I decided it must be the latter.

Jackson didn't waste any more time. He grabbed Fifi by the tail and swung her down the corridor. She landed on all fours and ran screaming into the control room. Jackson clamped our helmets on and shoved us into the airlocks. Air screamed out as the outer door slid open.

If I ever came close to praying it was then. I honestly believed the cards was all stacked on the other side of the table. They were, too, all except the ace Joe had tucked up his sleeve. But of course, I didn't know about it at the time.

We made our way from the ship in silence. Then Joe began to whistle. I could hear him through the small radio set in my helmet.

"What the heck are you whistling about, you darn fool?" I muttered. "Don't you realize we're going to cease to exist in about three minutes?" I was so mad that if I had been able to

I'd have slugged Joe one just on general principles. But Joe didn't seem to hear me. Suddenly he said:

"Let's find a nice quiet place to sit down."

"Sit down!" I yelped. "Is that all you can think about at a time like this?" Honestly, now I was sure he was crazy. But he wouldn't have it any other way. Course, in a way he was right. There wasn't anything we could do that would matter much. Even if we could get to the Staff Ship in time and free the Big Bugs from G.H.Q. who were trussed comfortably in the Control room, it would all be the same. One whiff of that disintegrating ray and we'd all be atoms! I swore sourly to myself.

Joe picked out a big boulder halfway between our ship and the G.H.Q. Cruiser. We sat down. Joe motioned towards the control room of our ship. We could see inside through the glassite hull.

"Watch closely, from now on," he said. "Here's where the fun begins."

Well I didn't doubt that. The fun was beginning all right. But it wasn't the kind of fun I went in for. The pirates were all gathered around the big gun and Jackson was preparing to swing the weapon upon us. I could feel my blood run cold and if I ever had the urge to run like heck, it was then. But there was no place to run. So I sat and waited. I didn't have to wait long.

Suddenly my attention was caught by a furry little object stealing across the room. It was Fifi! She sidled up to the huge metal door and pulled the key from the lock. Then she scurried around to the far side of the control room and passed beyond my vision! My heart beat faster. What was she up to?

I glanced at Jackson and his cut-

throat gang. They were too intent upon the gun to notice her. Then suddenly she came into view. She was holding one of Joe's ripe tomato bombs! She began to dance up and down and the pirates suddenly looked back at her. One of them made a threatening motion with his hand and dived at her. Fifi threw the tomato.

IT HIT the pirate squarely in the face.

Nothing happened. Nothing except the pirate was suddenly a mass of pulpy tomato around his mouth. Joe's bomb hadn't gone off. But that didn't really surprise me. As a chemist Joe was a flop.

Jackson looked like he would burst a blood vessel, he was so mad. He made a dive at Fifi, fumbling at his hip for his proton gun. But Fifi was too fast for him. She scrambled from the room and pulled the door shut behind her. Jackson reached it in a few seconds and jerked at the handle. It wouldn't give. Fifi had locked them in!

I turned to Joe. There was something fishy about all this.

"Why did she do that?" I snapped.

"To keep them in there." Joe answered quietly. —To keep them in there— Well, it was beyond me. But I didn't get much time to think about it. For Jackson, now mad as a wet hen turned and stalked to the big gun.

I could see that it was just about ready to spit. The tungsten filaments in the base were a bright yellow, turning white. It would all be over the second Jackson depressed the firing lever. But that second never came.

Suddenly there was a terrific flash of light and a cloud of smoke. The glass-ite hull shook tremblingly and for a minute I thought the whole darn ship would explode. The interior of the control room was made a shambles. When the smoke cleared I could see five

bodies lying on the floor, or what remained of them. They had been burnt and blown to pieces in the explosion. I grabbed Joe and began to dance in glee.

I lost my balance in the slight Lunar gravity and bounded about fifty feet in the air. When I came down I ran for the ship, Joe beside me.

"It didn't work!" I shouted. "The gun's a flop. It's a good thing Jackson happened along when he did. That would have been us if he hadn't!"

"The gun's all right," Joe panted as we reached the airlock and forced it open. "That didn't cause the explosion. Jackson didn't even trip the firing lever."

I stopped. "Well then, what the heck did?"

"I did." Joe grinned.

"You!" I fairly shouted, light beginning to dawn on me.

"Yep," he said, "me! You see, I sorta figured that maybe something might go wrong so I fixed up a rig while you were asleep, just in case. You remember that hissing noise we heard just before Jackson forced us out of the ship?"

I nodded dumbly.

"Well, that hissing came from a tank of hydrogen I planted under the control board beside the gun. When Jackson switched on the gun controls he automatically released a valve on the hydrogen tank. At the same time I put a piece of wet cotton covered with phosphorus beneath the base of the gun where the tungsten filaments were cased. Then, just before we left, I told Fifi to lock them in!"

The dawn turned into daylight for me. So that was it! And to think I considered that darn little ape dumb! The rest was obvious, but Joe pointed it out anyway. He wasn't going to miss this chance for glory.

"I figured the heat of the hot tung-

sten filaments would evaporate the water in the cotton just before the gun was ready to use. And at the same time the room would be practically full of hydrogen, especially around the gun. Nobody would know it either, since hydrogen is odorless. Well, when the water evaporated from the cotton, the phosphorus burst into flame and—blooie!”

Yes—blooie! And then suddenly I remembered something.

“Why, you darned fool!” I thundered. “What if Jackson hadn’t come along and we had been in there shooting that thing!”

Joe dropped his jaw slightly. “Gosh,”

he said, “I didn’t think of that!”

Well, G.H.Q. didn’t think Joe was crazy. In fact they gave him a medal. They gave Fifi a medal too. And they also gave Joe a complete laboratory in which he can work from now on. Heaven help anybody within a hundred miles of the place!

In a way I’m glad. Joe has some pretty nutty ideas I’ll grant you, but he’s a great guy just the same. Me? Well I’ve got a leave of absence for two months with full pay! And I’m hopping the first boat for Mars. There’s that cute little blonde up there who’s gonna help me make those two months a darn good time! . . .



THE ATOM OF DEMOCRITUS



IN THE days of Greek civilization Chemistry had little or no foundation. The ancient “chymist” had no clear idea of the elements, let alone compounds. This ignorance was due partly to the lack of apparatus or plainly over-looking such instruments as the Balance.

Those who worked with matter knew facts but had no theories to check; philosophers proposed theories but bothered little to investigate them. However, gradually these theories entered the level of the artisan where some speculation was made.

In our way of thinking this was not strange for how could the philosopher know of chemical matter and its composition when he considered but four elements, these being air, fire, water and earth.

Of the earliest philosophers Democritus was perhaps the most farseeing. It was he who stumbled upon the early atomic theory. His de-

duction came from a very simple and, no doubt, highly speculative manner.

One day, after one of his many lectures, he took a piece of metal and divided it into two parts, each one equal. This aroused his curiosity and he proceeded to repeat the procedure. This he continued until he reached a point where he could not continue due either to his crude equipment or that he feared that any further subdivision could cause the metal to lose its identity.

Summarizing his findings he concluded that the minute particle of matter he held should be called an atom (indivisible whole). In his philosophy classes he taught the assumption that matter consisted of these discrete particles separated from each other by space and constant motion. Little did he dare to prophecy the effects his discovery would have on the world to follow using his deductions.

Roy Shelton



ANIMAL WEATHERMAN



WHETHER the practices of observing the behavior of different animals by the various peoples of the globe in weather prediction have any scientific background or not they are interesting.

In American homes the weatherman is generally the dog. It is often said that rainy weather can be surely predicted from the fact of the dog’s eating grass. A cold spell may be predicted by observing the different spots the “pooch” picks out in the house to do his afternoon napping.

French farmers vouch for the authenticity of the duck as their weather prophet. Should the morning see a light rain the farmer will observe the length of time his barnyard ducks will remain

in it. If they merely waddle around for a short time and return to shelter he concludes that the day will turn out well. But should they remain in the rain with no appearance of returning to shelter he says there is no use going to the fields for the rain will certainly continue throughout the day.

The most novel barometer is that used in many German homes of today. A frog is placed in a glass jar under several inches of water and a small ladder leading to the top of the jar. When dry weather is expected the frog will climb the ladder to the top, but when rain is forthcoming he scampers for the bottommost depths of the jar.

Pete Bogg



• He writhed in agony as weird forces gripped him



THE VALLEY OF MADNESS

by ALEXANDER BLADE

A wreck in space is bad—but it was child's play to what awaited the survivors in Titan's mysterious "valley of madness"! It was something unknown in the water . . .

CALLING *Planet City*. Saunders on V29 calling *Planet City*. S.O.S. V29 calling. Answer please. V29 in distress. Calling *Planet City*."

Click.

"Planet City answering V29. Go

ahead. Your beam is all x. Awaiting report. Go ahead, V29."

Click.

"Hello, *Planet City*. Saunders on V29 calling, enroute from *Port Tellus*, Mars, to *Planet City*, Jupiter. We are in distress off Titan. Have run into

uncharted meteoric stream. Our central power tubes have been smashed. We are drifting towards *Titan*. Must land. Suggest you contact *Port Tellus* at once. Relay circumstances. Aid needed. That is all. V29 turning over. Go ahead *Planet City*."

"Report received, V29. What are your circumstances. Is immediate aid necessary. *Planet City* standing by. Report V29."

Click.

"V29 reporting. Aid is necessary. Have no surplus supplies aboard. One casualty to report. Lieutenant Lawrence Reynolds suffering possible concussion from meteor contact. Marcia Blakeley uninjured. Sergeant Kerson and myself all x. Reynolds seems to be in bad shape. Suggest you rush aid at once. V29 standing by. Go ahead *Planet City*."

Click.

"Sorry about Reynolds, V29. Will rush aid at once from *Port Tellus*. Keep your carrier beam in contact at all time. Will try to have aid to you in week. Sorry we can't help you here. Our transport fleet left three days ago. Will relay circumstances at once to *Port Tellus*. Sweet landing to you, V29. *Planet City* signing off."

Click.

* * *

Three figures stood before the radio control board in the stricken V29. Another figure lay upon a convertible wall bunk, his head swathed in bandages. One of the figures swore.

"I might have expected some such thing to happen to me at a time like this! And with a perfect record so far." Captain Erwin Saunders of the IPP switched off the set savagely. Beside him the trim figure of Sergeant Kerson moved forward.

"It's too bad, sir, but it's just one of those things. Everyone gets a bad trip

now and then."

"That's right," echoed a soft vibrant voice behind him, "I know how you feel, Captain, but the stream just couldn't be avoided. It's really the fault of those astronomers on Mars, they gave us clear passage!"

"I know," sighed Saunders, "but why did it have to happen when I carry the personal aide and niece of my employer aboard. If I'm not broken for this it will be a miracle."

The mild blue eyes surrounded by a wealth of chestnut curls, flared up.

"Oh no you won't. I'll see to that—if anyone gets busted it will be those astronomers on Mars! They got us into this—it's all their fault to begin with!"

Saunders smiled. It was a warm friendly smile, and it belied the truth of his fifty-five years. The tenseness of the situation eased.

But that didn't minimize any of the perils they faced. And Saunders knew it. He knew it better than anyone aboard. But he preferred not to tell what he knew.

Landing on *Titan*—that shunned world of madness—was going to be no easy task. Especially when the ship was minus central power tubes. But even that wasn't the worst of it. There was something uncanny about that world. And there was a reason why no sane space Commander ever landed there.

ASTRONOMERS had said the world was normal. But astronomers had never gone there to find out. Others had, but they never came back. None ever came back from *Titan*. That was why it was shunned. Spacemen develop queer superstitions. . . .

Saunders could remember the day his son, a young Lieutenant of the IPP, had taken his first run from Mars to

Jupiter. There had been three aboard his ship. They disappeared off Titan and had never been heard of since. That was three years ago. . . .

And now, the thing that all spacemen feared—a meteor collision—had happened to him, and his ship was drifting closer with each passing second to the world from whence nobody returned. Perhaps a slight shudder passed over Saunders as he stood there in deep reflection. He couldn't be sure—superstition did strange things sometimes.

"You'd better take over, sir, we're approaching Titan." Sergeant Kerson broke Saunders' reverie from the control room. He made his way forward. Marcia stayed with the injured man and renewed cold cloths on a deep gash over his temple.

The surface of Titan loomed gigantic on the viewplate. Pinnacle mountains stretched skyward over the desolate surface, and rocky wastes rolled at their bases. The immensity of Jupiter hung like an oversized orange in the sky, and the red spot in its side was a gigantic sore. The sun was low on the horizon and was no larger than a quarter. But that was all Saunders had time to notice; his every attention was riveted to the grim surface beneath the rapidly falling ship.

Before, behind, and all about them stretched the peaks. They loomed everywhere and invited disaster. And the slim form of the V29 crept alarmingly close to them with each passing second. Perspiration stood out on Saunders' forehead as he deftly applied the forward braking rockets in the path of a looming spire of rock. Beside him Sergeant Kerson hissed, gritting his teeth. He too saw the mass of rock ahead.

Saunders cursed and applied power to the right lateral tubes. The V29 veered sharply and missed the groping peak by inches.

Anxiously he gazed into the viewplate. There must be some level spot on which he could land! All that met his gaze was a tangle of intermingling peaks. A cold despair gripped him.

The ship had leveled into a long gliding crescent. And still no possible landing site presented itself. Saunders gripped the controls fiercely in the path of a new peril ahead.

Two conical spires yawned dead astern. There was no way out, and unless some miracle intervened, there was only destruction upon the jagged cliffs that spread across the narrow passage. With sweat rolling down his face, Saunders applied every ounce of skill at his command to the perilous task. Like a stricken bird, the V29 careened drunkenly through the opening, and just when it seemed as if she were about to be torn to bits by the reaching fingers of stone, the passage was cleared, and the V29 sailed through.

A cry of astonishment burst from Saunders' lips, and was echoed by Sergeant Kerson behind him. They had burst through into an enclosed valley, surrounded on all sides by spiraling peaks. And a valley to question the credulity of the sanest man. It stretched for at least two miles, bounded on one side by a huge forest, and on the other by a grassy plain. At the edge of the forest ran a narrow ribbon of water.

MARCIA entered the control room at that moment, and she stared into the viewplate in disbelief.

"Look—I can't believe it! It's like some fantastic dream—a valley in a world of desolation!"

"I'll admit I don't understand it," Saunders replied grimly, "but it's a Godsend to us in our condition. I only hope the ship from *Port Tellus* will be able to follow our carrier beam through the passage." Then he directed his

attention to the task of landing the crippled vessel.

They skirted the treetops of the forest narrowly, and Saunders, applying a desperate spurt of power to the forward tubes, dropped the ship swiftly towards the green plain beneath.

Too late did he realize he applied a fraction too much power in retarding their forward motion. The ship suddenly hit the ground with a crash that threw the three figures in the control room to the floor. Rivets shrieked in protest, and seams parted. The forward tubes were crushed to a mass of twisted metal, and had the ship been crippled before, it was now a permanent wreck.

Saunders struggled to his knees and rubbed a tender spot upon his head. Kerson arose fingering the base of his skull gingerly, but Marcia lay insensible upon the floor. A tiny trickle of blood ran down her temple and dyed the copper hair around it a deep crimson. Saunders swore.

"Darn it!—quick Kerson, get some water. My God! Why does everything have to happen to me—first it's a meteor, then it's a crash, and now it's my boss's niece!" He groaned and carried the prone body of the girl to a vacant bunk. Kerson tore out of the control room.

The water tanks were stored aft, and Kerson grabbed a towel from a rack as he sped towards them. His hands fumbled at the spout releasing the catch. A feeble trickle of water ran from the spout. Kerson turned and glanced at the pressure gauges. They read zero! But that was impossible—the tanks had been full when they left *Port Tellus*—and then he heard the slight gurgling sound. It was the sound of running water—water escaping from the sealed tanks!

"Captain Saunders!" croaked Ker-

son hoarsely, "the water—it's draining away—"

Saunders came running. He stopped short beside Kerson and listened. Then he too heard the gurgling noise. Something caught in his throat and he leapt toward the airlock.

"We've got to stop it!" he hissed, "If that water gets away . . ."

"But, sir—" cried Kerson, "the atmosphere—we don't know if it's safe—"

"Safe, hell!" roared Saunders, "if we don't plug that leak it'll be curtains for us! We don't carry other reserves on special flights."

The airlock hissed open and Saunders dashed through. Kerson shrugged his shoulders and followed.

Saunders didn't have time to worry about the Titanian atmosphere. He didn't have time to worry about anything except the split seam aft from which poured a steady stream of water—water that meant the difference between life and death for them.

Kerson ran up holding the towel. He stared at the gushing stream of water. Saunders grabbed the towel from his hand and rammed it into the breach. The flow ceased, but around their feet spread an ever widening pool. Saunders gazed at the pool and there was despair in his eyes. Kerson saw it too, and he felt a sinking despair in his stomach. But he did not show it.

"God knows how much we have left—and with a full week to go . . ." Saunders shook his head and turned from the pool around his feet. Sergeant Kerson was gazing beyond the ship, to the forest in the distance. Suddenly he started.

"Look over there, sir, what do you make of it?" Saunders followed the direction of Kerson's gaze. And then he saw it too.

Beyond the spaceship, about a hun-

dred yards in the distance ran the narrow ribbon of water they had seen from the air. And beyond this stream lay the forest. But it was not to the forest that Kerson pointed, it was to something else. Something that lay by the edge of the stream.

IT LOOKED like the remains of some lost ship, and as Saunders strained his eyes to get a closer look at it, he was sure that it was.

A strange feeling passed over him as he looked at the rusty hulk in the distance. An intangible feeling—as if some memory were struggling for supremacy, but was not quite able to assert itself. And the more he looked at it, the stranger the feeling became. There was something familiar about that wreck.

"Oh!" A short cry broke in upon Saunders' reflections. Marcia Blakeley stood in the open airlock. The cut upon her temple was visible beneath the mass of copper hair around it, but the blood had dried. She smiled weakly.

"I wondered where you had gone—so silly of me to faint—"

Kerson ran forward and helped her from the ship. She swayed slightly on her feet for a moment, but then recovered. Then she saw the pool beside the ship. Saunders watched her eyes widen in alarm. He answered her unspoken question.

"Water . . . The seams split when we landed—my fault—"

The girl saw the dejected look upon his face and shook her head.

"You did your best, Captain, we're even lucky to be alive." She looked again at the pool. "Is it—all gone?"

Saunders sighed. "I'm afraid most of it is. At any rate, we'll have a tough time of it until aid arrives—especially with a sick man aboard." His eyes suddenly hardened. "Good Lord! I forgot all about Reynolds!"

"He's all right, Captain," the girl replied quickly, "I looked to him before coming out." Her pretty brow clouded: "I do wish he'd regain consciousness—that cut on his head bothers me . . ."

"As soon as the rescue ship arrives he'll be taken care of," Saunders answered. "But what's worrying me now is this water supply—"

Kerson broke in upon him, gazing towards the distant stream. "Do you think we might be able to use any of that water, sir, if an emergency arose?"

"We don't dare try it," Saunders replied. "Like as not it's poisonous—everything about this world is damned funny."

Kerson shrugged his shoulders. It was not his place to question the decisions of his superiors. And too, Captain Saunders was right. It would be dangerous to sample water from a world of which little was actually known.

Marcia glanced at the landscape about them and shuddered. "I think I'll go and stay with Larry—I don't know just what it is—but something about this place makes me uneasy."

Saunders forced a smile upon his lips. "There's nothing to worry about, we're perfectly safe here as long as we stay to the ship. But I think you're right about Reynolds, perhaps you better stay with him until the shock of that collision wears off." The girl forced a smile upon her face in return and re-entered the airlock. When she had disappeared:

"Kerson," Saunders addressed the Sergeant briskly, "do you notice anything the matter with your ears?"

Kerson started as though he were shot. "Why—why yes, sir, now that you mention it—I do! A sort of dim ringing—but I thought I was just on edge—"

"Hum," muttered Saunders, and he became immersed in a deep concentra-

tion. Again that haunting memory struggled to gain precedence in his mind. The memory of that twisted mass of steel by the edge of the stream.

Kerson turned his attention once more to the distant wreck. That it was the remains of a spaceship he did not doubt. But there were no memories in Kerson's mind. There was only curiosity. Silently he slipped from the side of his commanding officer and walked swiftly towards the ribbon of the stream.

SAUNDERS didn't notice that Kerson was gone, for some moments. His mind was filled with other thoughts. But when he did, a curse ran from his lips.

"The young fool! Heaven knows what danger lurks around here!" He would have called after him, but didn't for fear of further alarming the girl. Instead he ran after him. Dimly he noticed that a breeze had begun to blow, and that the shadows were lengthening about him. The grass rippled in waves beneath his feet as he ran. Kerson was nearly to the scene.

"Kerson!" called Saunders sharply, now out of earshot of the ship, "come back!"

The young officer turned at the sound, but he was already to the wreck. Beside him the stream rolled sluggishly, its waters a slight yellow tinge. Curiosity held him where he was, as Saunders pulled up at his side.

"Who told you to leave the ship!" he demanded harshly. But Kerson didn't flinch, though his eyes dropped before his superior's angry gaze.

"I'm sorry, sir, I was curious." He raised his eyes: "The wreckage—"

"Damn the wreckage!" swore Saunders fiercely, but then the fire left his eyes, and his voice stilled. Something caught in his throat. His eyes caught

the faint blurred outline of a name upon the battered hull before them. Kerson confirmed what he saw.

"It's the *Europea*, sir."

Saunders swayed on his feet, and a mist ran before his eyes. Kerson looked at him in alarm.

"Is there anything wrong, sir?"

"No," croaked Saunders, passing a hand over his eyes, "nothing's wrong." But he wasn't sure. And Kerson looked at him in alarm as he suddenly walked forward and touched the metal of the wreck with a trembling hand.

It was cold. But it wasn't any colder than Saunders heart. His heart was very cold, and his eyes were misty.

The wreck was lonely, and there was something about it that Kerson didn't like. Some hidden secret that seemed to say: "*Go away—far away—*" But Kerson was a soldier, and soldiers don't run from the path of danger. At least, from dangers they can understand. Nevertheless, he was strangely disturbed, the more so because Captain Saunders—grim, hard Saunders, showed evidence of something strange too. But Kerson didn't know. . . .

Then he pulled himself together and walked slowly around the ship. A rippling sound brought him up short, but it was only the sluggish motion of the stream coursing its way beyond the broken hull. But then Kerson tensed. Something contracted inside him and he stared. Saunders was suddenly beside him, and he stared too.

Beside the water's edge, and lapping in the current, were three skeletons—the remains of three men, masses of tragic bone. Nausea worked at the pit of Kerson's stomach, but he was a soldier. Beside him, Saunders gasped, and there was a weird light in his eyes. They both moved forward and stood staring down upon the things that had once been men.

There was something about those remains, thought Kerson, they weren't the dust of men who had died in peace—they were twisted and had a pronounced yellow tinge about them. He had seen the bodies of men twisted in just such a way who had died in the fire-swamps of Venus. There were no swamps on Titan. . . .

Something gleamed dully about the wrist of one of the skeletons. Something metallic. Kerson knelt and removed the oblong shape from the hand. It was a regulation identification tab, worn by all commissioned officers of the IPP.

The name engraved upon it was partly obscured by yellow flakes, the same yellow flakes that covered the bones on the ground. He picked the flakes away and read the wording: "Lieutenant Robert Erwin Sau—" his voice trailed off into silence, and his eyes raised to meet those of his Captain. He finished the sentence in a whisper—"Saunders . . . Section 7A, IPP. . . ."

Something caught in his throat and his hand trembled. Suddenly he knew why the Captain had acted so strangely when he saw the name of the wrecked ship. And now . . . he knew, and the knowledge did something to his heart.

But Saunders wasn't aware that Sergeant Kerson stood with bowed head. He wasn't aware of anything about him. For that elusive memory had come to the fore. A young handsome face smiled at him in his mind. The face of a happy man. His son had been happy. . . . There was mist in his eyes, and for the first time in his life, his shoulders sagged. But he too was a soldier, and soldiers cannot flinch. Not even in the path of sorrow.

A WIND was blowing from across the stream and it ran over the trees

of the forest. Twilight was fading swiftly into night and it threw shadows beyond the edge of the horizon. Saunders turned and traced a path from the stream. Kerson glanced once more at the tragic remains and followed.

As they drew near to the V29, Kerson broke the silence, but his voice was far from steady.

"I—I'm sorry, sir, I didn't know . . ."

Saunders straightened. The old glint was back in his eyes. "Sorry?" he questioned, though there was a hint of emotion in his voice. "He—the lieutenant—died in the line of duty. . . . We all take the same chances, Sergeant. . . ." Once again he was the soldier.

The wind was blowing stronger when they reached the ship, and it brought across its wings something else. Saunders stopped at the airlock and looked at Kerson strangely.

"Do you notice anything peculiar, Sergeant?" His voice was tense and there was an air of expectancy about him. Kerson glanced swiftly about.

"God sir!—I—I hear voices singing!"

Saunders clenched his fists and for a moment there was fear in his eyes. He heard it too. A soft melodious sound wafted on the night wind, coming from nowhere, and yet all directions. His ears developed a slight ache as the sound grew plainer. It was like a distant choir singing a wierd symphony of doom. It was eerie—it was uncanny—it was the most unusually terrifying sound that he had ever heard. And it was impossible! A choir singing on the face of a barren world. . . . Saunders shuddered slightly and was ashamed. He could face the terrors of space, the sharp battles with pirates—but something he couldn't see. . . .

"Darn it, sir, what do you make of it!" Kerson's voice was harsh. Men become annoyed at things they can-

not understand.

"I wish I knew," breathed Saunders. "It's uncanny!— Everything about this damnable world is uncanny!"

"It's no wonder sir, that Titan is blacklisted . . . —it's—"

"It's high time we were getting into the ship, and staying there!" snapped Saunders suddenly, "the less we see of this place the better!"

He jumped into the outer airlock and when Kerson had followed, shoved the steel panel into place. The automatic release had been broken in the crash. Marcia met them at the door to the control room.

"Captain, I know it sounds foolish—but I'm sure I hear voices singing somewhere—" Her eyes searched Saunders' face but she was disappointed in what she found. Saunders knew that to agree with her would only make matters worse, and a further weakening of their morale must be avoided at all costs. So he did not look at her when he answered, he looked at Kerson, and he understood.

"It's the wind that makes you think so," he laughed, "what would a choir be doing on a place like Titan!"

The girl smiled weakly. "I suppose you're right, it must be my nerves, but—"

"Of course I am," he affirmed, placing an arm paternally around her slim shoulders. "You're merely overwrought—and it's no wonder from what you've been through." His words had the desired effect, and he only wished that he himself might be as easily convinced. He abruptly changed the subject.

"How is Lieutenant Reynolds getting on?"

Marcia hung her head. "He's just the same. Seems to be half despondent at times, but then he always sinks back. His lips are cracked with fever and he tosses restlessly. If only we

had more water I might be able to work that temperature down . . ."

THERE were hard lines around Saunders' mouth and there was a hardness around his heart. The rescue ship could not possibly arrive in less than five days, and in the meantime . . .

Sergeant Kerson had moved over to the tanks and was tapping them gently. The sound produced was hollow. The coldness around Saunders' heart became frigid. The water was low. Too darned low! If only they could forget about thirst—but it's hard to forget when an injured man moans and your throat is dry.

Saunders made his way into the control room and was slightly cheered by the low, almost inaudible hum of the carrier beam. He knew that somewhere out in space a ship was following that beam. Maybe they could hold out until it arrived. But he wasn't so sure. It was hard to have to sit back idly knowing you were powerless to do anything. It was hard, especially for a man used to ceaseless activity.

Wearily he sat at his desk and drew forth the half-filled log book. Whatever else occurred, at least he could leave a written record of their misfortune. He proceeded to write.

Sergeant Kerson came in and watched. He seated himself across the room and lit a cigarette. The silence was broken only by the scratching of Saunders' pen, and the low whine of the carrier beam. Smoke billowed about Kerson's head, then he arose and began to pace up and down the room. It was beginning to get his nerves, this inactivity. If only something would happen!

And then that something did.

Twilight had long since deepened into night on the ship's exterior, and through the viewplate shadows were

thick. But it was not the coming of night that brought Kerson up shortly in an instant, and stopped the incessant scratching of Saunders' pen. It was something else.

Outside the wind was blowing again. And wafted on its wings came a repetition of the sound that had mystified them earlier in the evening. *Something* out there in the semi-darkness was singing! And the song brought a chill of apprehension to them. There was something utterly ominous in the sensation—not illusion, but stark reality. Saunders swore and dropped his pen. Kerson crushed his cigarette under foot, and both of them remained transfixed.

It was unlike any sound they had ever heard. It was like a ghostly choir out of some forgotten miasma. The notes rose in cadences of a theme so fantastic that the melody caused a quickening of their pulse, and the blood pounded fiercely through their veins. It seemed to pluck at every fiber in their being. For the first time in Saunders' life, he felt a touch of fear, and Kerson, standing by his side, shivered.

"Captain!" Marcia stood in the doorway of the control room, her eyes wide with an unknown fear. "Captain—do you hear voices—tell me you do!" There was a pleading note in her voice. Saunders knew that there was no way out now—they must face the truth.

"Yes," he breathed, "I hear it, and Sergeant Kerson does too. But we haven't the faintest idea what it is. It might be the wind... *it must be...*" But inwardly he knew that it wasn't. Silence fell in the control room.

Kerson was standing before the viewplate, gazing into the semi-darkness of the night. Overhead the might of Jupiter was edging beyond the horizon, and it threw a pale glow over terrain around the ship. Suddenly he started.

"Look!—Over there by the stream!"

Saunders jumped to his feet and Marcia flew to his side. Then they all stared into the night.

IN THE ghostly light of Jupiter, near the edge of the distant stream by the timberline, something was moving. *Something that was not one!* It, or they, seemed to be a series of phosphorescent wraiths, and they flitted between the trees of the forest and out to the stream where they turned the waters into a limpid cauldron of yellow light. Marcia shuddered and drew close to Saunders. He put an arm about her shoulders.

The weird chant, carried on by the wind, grew plainer, and to Saunders, it seemed as if it whispered madness into his brain. It ran through him with the intensity of a rampant flood. It hummed through him in liquid tones of a force indescribable. It seemed to absorb as it went, and it left him panting and dry in its wake. An overwhelming desire for water possessed him, but he fought it down. The water was so low. . . .

The melody grew more pronounced as the night wore on, and the wraiths continued to flicker by the forest's edge. Sleep was impossible though their every nerve screamed surcease. They tried whistling, even singing themselves, but it was no use. The maddening song continued to beat upon them.

Dawn found them haggard and spent, and the song faded into silence with the coming of day. Kerson peered through the viewplate with bloodshot eyes. But the wraiths had disappeared.

"My throat's as dry as a Martian desert!" Saunders swore and rubbed himself with an aching hand. Every bone in his body ached—if only he could plunge into a river of cool refreshing water. Something whispered

in his brain that there was a cool refreshing river outside. . . . There were three skeletons out there too. . . .

"God—for a drink of water!" Kerson gazed longingly at the tank in the aft chamber. Saunders read his thought.

"We'll have to ration what's left," he spoke huskily. "We've got at least four days to go. . . ."

"And Lieutenant Reynolds, sir?" Kerson glanced towards the still figure in the outer room.

"We'll have to conserve the majority of what we have left for him," Saunders replied grimly. "That fever has to be broken—at all costs." He got painfully to his feet and left the control room. He bent over Reynolds and felt his cheek. It was hot.

Picking up a towel he strode to the depleted water tanks and opened the spigot. A tiny stream of blessed water flowed forth and wet the surface of the towel. Turning, he retraced his way to the injured officer and placed it on his forehead. Then he filled three small cups with water and returned to the control room.

The cups were drained in an instant. Kerson gulped his down in a single draught, and gazed wistfully at the empty depths. Marcia gazed at hers too; so did Saunders. Thirst was a demon in their souls, and like a demon, it consumed them. But thirst was only one of their passions. Fatigue wracked them too. Marcia slumped into a chair and was asleep almost instantly. Kerson followed suit, but Saunders couldn't find rest for hours. He kept thinking about a small mass of bone lying in the ebb of the stream by the forest. Finally he sank into lethargy, but though he ceased to think—he dreamt. . . .

THE following days were like a nightmare to the marooned party.

The water had ceased to trickle from the tank; it dripped slowly, and the intervals between drops grew longer. And at night the song of madness beat upon their brains until they thought they should go mad.

Saunders didn't know how they were able to stand it. That they were cracking, he knew. And help was so near.

Marcia stood the test bravely, and Saunders' heart went out to her in admiration. As toughened as he was to the hard life of the spaceways, the strain was beginning to catch up with him—and Sergeant Kerson had a strange look in his eyes at times. It was that darned singing—that mad singing—as relentless as death itself. If only they could close their ears to it, but he knew they had tried, in vain.

On the evening of the fifth night the last drop of water fell from the tanks. And there was still another night to go. Reynolds had begun to toss upon his bunk and seemed on the verge of regaining consciousness. Inwardly Saunders hoped that he wouldn't. It was enough that three of them must face the madness in the night.

Shadows fell swiftly around the ship and soon the crescent edge of Jupiter hung over the horizon. Saunders sat writing in the log book at his desk. Kerson lounged against the control panel, a cigarette burning lazily between his lips. While Marcia sat silently in a corner of the room staring dreamily at the viewplate. Only the faint scratching of Saunders' pen, and the low hum of the carrier beam broke the tense silence. Each seemed to be immersed in his own reflections, but everyone's ears were keyed to a tune—listening. Then it came.

It rose in minor cadences upon the wings of the night. It beat down upon them with the intensity of a thousand angry bees. And, gazing into the view-

plate they saw, flickering out of the forest, the misty wraiths who heralded the coming of the song. It was madness—and like madness, was absorbing every trace of sanity they still possessed. Kerson began humming softly.

The singing was louder tonight, thought Saunders, as he wrote slowly in the book. And it resembled even more, the soft cascading rumble of a distant waterfall. He was thirsty—they were, all thirsty. If only there was a little more water. . . .

The night wore on. Saunders continued to write, and only the sound of his pen broke the monotony of the singing. He couldn't hear the carrier beam now. Perhaps the reserve batteries had expired, or maybe he was growing mad. He wasn't sure, and anyway, he didn't seem to care now—nothing mattered anymore, if only he could get some water.

Hours later the melody began to change. Slowly at first, but then with a startling rapidity. The minor cadences smoothed into flowing symphonies and the tones were cool and soothing. It made Saunders think more of water, cool . . . soothing. He almost thought he felt a touch of spray in the air about him. But he knew there was no water, except in the stream by the forest. There were three skeletons by the stream . . .

Kerson moved to the viewplate, and there was a great longing in his eyes. He too smelled water. His tongue was dry and parched, and his throat was contracted. Saunders stared at him and felt a shudder pass through his body. Dimly he heard Kerson whisper: "Water . . . water out there . . . tons of it . . . cool soothing . . . tons of it . . . water . . ."

Saunders fought to keep a hold upon himself. He must not crack now! *He must not!* Marcia glided silently be-

side Kerson. There was longing in her eyes too, and her lips were cracked.

Saunders breathed a prayer and continued writing. They must hold on—it was only a few hours till dawn—and then help would arrive. . . . But those hours were a long distance off in the minds of Kerson and the girl. And soon they grew distant to Saunders too. They only knew that they were thirsty, and there was water out there. Water to cool that ache in their throats. Water to soothe and heal.

SAUNDERS trembled as he wrote. The pen moved slower now. Kerson and Marcia stood motionless before the viewplate, and their eyes were filled with longing. But their eyes were no longer their own. They were filled with song, the song of madness carried by the whispering wind. And as they stood there and gazed, the song changed tempo and beat upon them with a quickened rhythm. It became a haunting melody of beat. It was rhythm—the kind of rhythm that soldiers march to, the kind that makes beautiful girls want to dance. And still the echo of a distant waterfall beckoned.

Kerson suddenly straightened and his feet beat a staccato rhythm upon the floor. One . . . two . . . three four. Soldiers march that rhythm, and Kerson was a soldier. And he knew there was water out there to cool his aching throat. He marched towards the airlock.

Saunders watched him go but made no attempt to stop him. *He* wanted to march too—it was glorious to march, especially when you could march to water—but still he saw those skeletons by the stream. . . .

Marcia swayed lightly on her feet. The haunting strains caught at her, and she began to dance slowly across

the room in graceful movements. Beautiful girls like to dance—Marcia was a beautiful girl, and she liked to dance more than anything else in the world . . . except possibly to get to the water by the stream. She danced after Kerson who marched into the airlock.

Saunders' fingers wrote but his mind was not behind the movement. He saw marching feet, millions of marching feet, and they all tramped a dusty path towards water. He could smell water, as those myriads of men before him must have smelled it. Water—water—water—water! The rhythm pounded into his brain, set it on fire. It was like a page torn from some forgotten history book. He suddenly knew that a malignant entity ruled on this evil world. Was driving him carefully insane. Was going to get him, Kerson, and the girl, as assuredly as it had gotten those myriads before them. And those three skeletons. . . .

Tramp, tramp, tramp. Boom, boom, boom. There was the sound of drums beating. There was a waterfall, marching men, drums, *water, men, marching, men, drums, men, marching, water.* . . .

The pen dropped from Saunders' unsteady hand and his throat contracted. His feet moved, slowly at first, then faster, beating a rhythm, a maddening rhythm, beat a steady rhythm upon the floor.

* * *

Somewhere in the dim recesses of his mind, Lawrence Reynolds felt a dim monotonous throbbing. It caused his head to ache and he groaned. He passed a trembling hand over his eyes and felt the thickness of a dry cloth. Then he opened his eyes.

For a moment the world spun in dizzy circles, but gradually the dizziness passed and he gazed about him in bewilderment. Where was he? What had happened? Then suddenly mem-

ory came flooding back.

He was in the V29 bound for *Planet City*. He couldn't be sure, but all he recalled was being four days out when suddenly there came a terrific crash, and a thousand lights had exploded in his brain. That was all he remembered. But a question arose in his mind. Where was everybody? Where? . . .

Suddenly his attention was drawn to the control room entrance. A figure suddenly appeared, it was Captain Saunders—but something was wrong. He was staring straight ahead and was marching slowly. Reynolds sat up painfully and called to him. Nothing happened. That was strange, nothing happened at all. He tried again: "Captain Saunders!"

He was sure he had shouted the words, but again nothing happened. Then it dawned upon him that he—couldn't hear! Dimly he recalled that painful explosion in his head and tried to understand that his auditory nerves must have been paralyzed. God! Must he remain deaf. . . . Maybe the shock would wear off. But that could wait, *must* wait. First of all he must see what was wrong. He watched Saunders disappear into the airlock.

Painfully Lawrence Reynolds rose to his feet and tested his body. No, there were no bones broken, and he seemed perfectly fit but for an aching pain in his muscles. He gently fingered the coagulated gash upon his temple and walked into the control room. It was deserted.

UPON the floor lay a pen, a splatter of ink around it. Reynolds picked it up and then his eyes fell upon the open log book. The last few words were scrawled and a blot of ink marred the end of a sentence. Suddenly he caught the name of Marcia in the middle of a page and he seized the book

anxiously. . . .

Cold terror gripped him as he finished the story of the torturous days on Titan. An icy hand gripped at his heart. He moved to the viewplate—and saw . . . It was true then, that terrible account of maddening song and torture . . . merciful God!—it was true! Out on the grassy surface of the valley on Titan, from whence the shadows of night began to slowly lift, three figures moved. Two marched, one danced, but all three were headed for a single destination—the stream in the distance around which flickered the misty phosphorescent wraiths of madness. A hoarse cry burst from Reynolds' lips, but he didn't hear it. He couldn't hear anything, not even the rhythmical beat of the music that was borne on the night wind . . .

Turning, he dashed from the control room, a prayer on his lips. Out onto the grassy plain he sped, and the prayer grew in his heart. If only he could reach them in time. For he saw the horrible truth of it, and the knowledge turned his blood to water. *He must reach them!*

The long shadows hovering over the valley had begun to disperse. Dawn approached. But the wraiths still flickered in the shadows of night. And the song continued to beat upon the brains of the three marchers. Kerson marched proudly, Marcia danced beside him, ever and around, while Saunders brought up the rear.

Behind them, racing with the speed of desperation, came Reynolds. He drew closer with each passing second, but so did the stream. And by it glistened three. . . .

The wreck of the *Europea* lay dead ahead. Reynolds knew that they must never reach it. He raced forward faster.

The stream lay only thirty yards

away when Reynolds caught up with Saunders. He didn't waste a second. Pausing slightly he clenched a fist, and not hearing himself say it, he smashed a solid blow into the Captain's jaw. "Sorry, sir!" Saunders fell and lay still. Then Reynolds was running again.

The dismal ruins of the wrecked spaceship lay but a few yards distant when he caught up with Marcia. He hated the thing he was about to do, but he knew that he must. Catching her by the wrist he spun her around. His heart twisted in agony as he saw the insane light in her eyes. He did not hesitate. The blow was short but it carried weight behind it. The girl sagged forward into his arms. Gently he lowered her to the ground, and then he was running again. One more . . .

Horror filled his face as he saw he was too late. Kerson had already reached the *Europea*, and was kneeling beside the stream. His belly was flat on the ground now, and as his mouth sucked greedily at the yellow water, flickering wraiths fluttered over his head. Beside Kerson three skeletons grinned in the eerie light. They must have been drinking when. . . .

Reynolds leapt forward, but knew it was too late. He almost sensed what was about to happen, and stopped dead in his tracks as it did.

Kerson suddenly clambered to his feet and stood swaying and clutching at his throat. Before Reynolds' horrified gaze, smoke curled upwards from his nostrils and then little tongues of fire licked from his mouth. Within the space of seconds, his entire body was a blaze of blue yellow flame. . . . It was horrible, terrible, ghastly. And then a pungent odor assailed Reynolds' nostrils, and he suddenly knew he had been right.

Phosphorous! Pure phosphorous—the stream was alive with it, and it

burst into a consuming pyre when the heat of Kerson's body ignited it . . .

Nausea worked at the pit of his stomach and he turned away from the scene. Behind him wraiths flickered in delight as if a great hunger had been satisfied for them. . . . Dawn broke in the East and the first rays of the morning fell on four skeletons by the stream . . .

THE speck in the sky grew large. It grew into the outline of a spaceship. It was a silver shaft, whistling down through the Titanian atmosphere towards the valley enclosed between huge mountains.

Three figures stood close together

and watched the speck in the sky grow. There was a mist in their eyes.

Captain Saunders gazed fleetingly at the ruins by the stream. A film overcast his eyes momentarily. Skeletons . . . four . . .

Lieutenant Lawrence Reynolds stood with his arms about Marcia. She looked into his eyes and there was thanksgiving, and something else. In the sky there was life, life coming to take them away from the madness where no man should ever have come. Reynolds turned at a touch beside him. Saunders stood there hand outstretched. Reynolds gripped it hard. Then they raised their eyes and watched the speck in the sky grow . . .

Vignettes

OF FAMOUS SCIENTISTS

By ALEXANDER BLADE

Jacobus Henricus Van't Hoff

JACOBUS HENRICUS VAN'T HOFF, Dutch physical chemist, was born in Rotterdam, Holland, on August 30, 1852. He studied in turn at the universities of Delft, Leyden, Bonn, Paris and Utrecht, after which he became an assistant instructor in 1876 at the last named institution. Here he displayed so much ability that in 1878 he was called to the chair of chemistry and physics at the Amsterdam University from which he passed in 1896 to the same position at the University of Berlin. As his position here involved no teaching duties he accepted an honorary professorship in the university so that he might lecture if he wished. He was elected a foreign member of the Royal Society in 1897 and awarded its Davy medal in 1893; he received the Nobel prize in 1901 and died on March 1, 1911, at Steglitz.

In addition to having taken a high rank among investigators in the field of physics, his great contribution to the advance of knowledge consisted in important discoveries in the domain of stereochemistry, that branch of the science which has to

do with those quite numerous cases of isomerism—substances identical in chemical composition but displaying different properties under certain optical and other influences—which cannot be explained under the doctrine of the linking of the atoms. As to these, he reached the conclusion in 1874 (which has since been amply corroborated) that all optically active compounds—and only such—contain one or more asymmetric carbon atoms or groups of atoms differing from one another. Several years later he succeeded in working out a theory of geometrical isomerism, which to date has been found capable of making clear all the phenomena so far observed in this department of research, which has now become an important branch of applied science. It was originally confined only to compounds of carbon, but has since been extended into those of nitrogen.

Van't Hoff's first research was on cyanecetic and malonic acids. Starting with the results of the work of Wislicenus on the lactic acids, van't Hoff showed that the four valencies of the carbon atom

were probably directed in space towards the four corners of a regular tetrahedron; in this way optical activity, shown to be always associated with an "asymmetric carbon atom," could readily be explained. An identical idea was put forward two months later (November, 1874), quite independently, by J. A. LeBel, whose name is generally linked with that of van't Hoff in connection with the theory of asymmetric carbon. The concept was attacked by Kolbe, but its value was soon universally realized and it laid the foundation stone of the science of stereo-chemistry.

IN 1884 van't Hoff's second important work was published. It dealt with the application of thermo-dynamics to chemical reactions, and was probably his greatest contribution to physical chemistry. He developed the principles of chemical kinetics, described a new method of determining the order of a reaction, and applied thermo-dynamics to chemical equilibria; in the course of this work he deduced the connection between the equilibrium constant of a reaction and the temperature, in the form of an equation known as the "van't Hoff isochore." He generalized this in the form of the "principle of mobile equilibrium," a special case of the principle developed by Le Chatelier at the same time (1884).

In the course of the same study van't Hoff introduced the modern concept of chemical affinity as the maximum work obtainable as the result of a reaction and showed how it may be calculated from measurements of osmotic pressure, gas pressure and the e.m.f. of reversible galvanic cells.

In 1886 he published the results of his study of dilute solutions and showed the analogy existing between them and gases, since both obey equations of the type $pV = RT$. During the next nine years he developed this work in connection with the theory of electrolytic dissociation enunciated by Arrhenius in 1887. As part of this work he carried out a series of researches on the conditions of formation and decomposition of double salts, and on his translation to Berlin in 1896 he developed this into the important study of the formation of oceanic salt deposits with special reference to those at Stassfurt, Saxony.

The department of physical chemistry is a comparatively recent addition to the roster of the sciences; but one that has become necessary to cover those many phenomena along the boundary between physics and chemistry that have arisen for consideration by the students of both. A few of these are, molecules and molecular weights, solutions, dissociation, thermo-chemistry, electro-chemistry, photo-chemistry, evaporation, distillation, freezing, melting, boiling and critical temperatures. Van't Hoff was regarded while living as its chief apostle, and certainly has done more than anyone else so far to raise it to the position of an independent branch of research. He was also the originator of the following generalization, which appears to be true in all departments:

"Whenever any change of any kind in the realm of Nature can accomplish work, that is, overcome resistance, it must proceed when the resistance is absent."

THE END

DIAL OF AHAZ

ALTHOUGH totally devoid of any astronomical instruments the early "star gazers" did quite well in their work. By pure physical observation they noted such things as the position of the sun at various times of the year when it was at its farthest point north and point south. Between these two positions they established the interval of time we call the year.

These and many other important findings were due solely to the efforts of the Chaldeans. In their venture with time they worked out the Zodiac table consisting of the twelve constellations through which Old Sol must pass. From the fact that the moon resumed its first phase every thirty days the name "moonth" was ascribed to that period. By gradual usage the name was transformed until today we have the name month. Because they worshipped seven heavenly bodies they established the seven day week and like those that followed them set aside one of these days as a day of worship.

Not until the time of Caesar did the calendar undergo any great change. However, Julius took it as one of his duties to totally revamp the construction of the year. By his decree all odd months, (1st, 3rd) were to consist of thirty-one days. The others should have thirty except Feb-

ruary, which was to enjoy this privilege every fourth year. Further, he set aside the seventh month, July, in his honor. Not to be outdone by his predecessor, Emperor Augustus also decided on a month to perpetuate his memory. He therefore proceeded to reduce February by one day and added it to the eighth month, August, making it equal with Caesar's July. No further major changes were made until 1582 A.D. when it was found that 365 days and not $365\frac{1}{4}$ went to make the year. This correction was made by Pope Gregory XIII. This change consisted in making the last year of the century a leap year only when it is divisible by 400. Thus, although 1900 was not a leap year, 2000 will be.

To the Chaldeans also goes the credit for forming the day of 24 hours and constituting each hour of 60 minutes, each minute 60 seconds. They chose 60 because it was the most facile number being easily divisible by a larger group of numbers than any other.

The earliest record of timepieces to be evolved from these findings is found in the Second Book of Kings, XX, 11, where mention is made of the "Dial of Ahaz." This, it is opined, was an early sundial that provided the foundation for all later clocks of ensuing ages.

D. Wroble



We ran toward the figure lying flat
on its back, moaning in agony

The OCEAN DEN of MERCURY

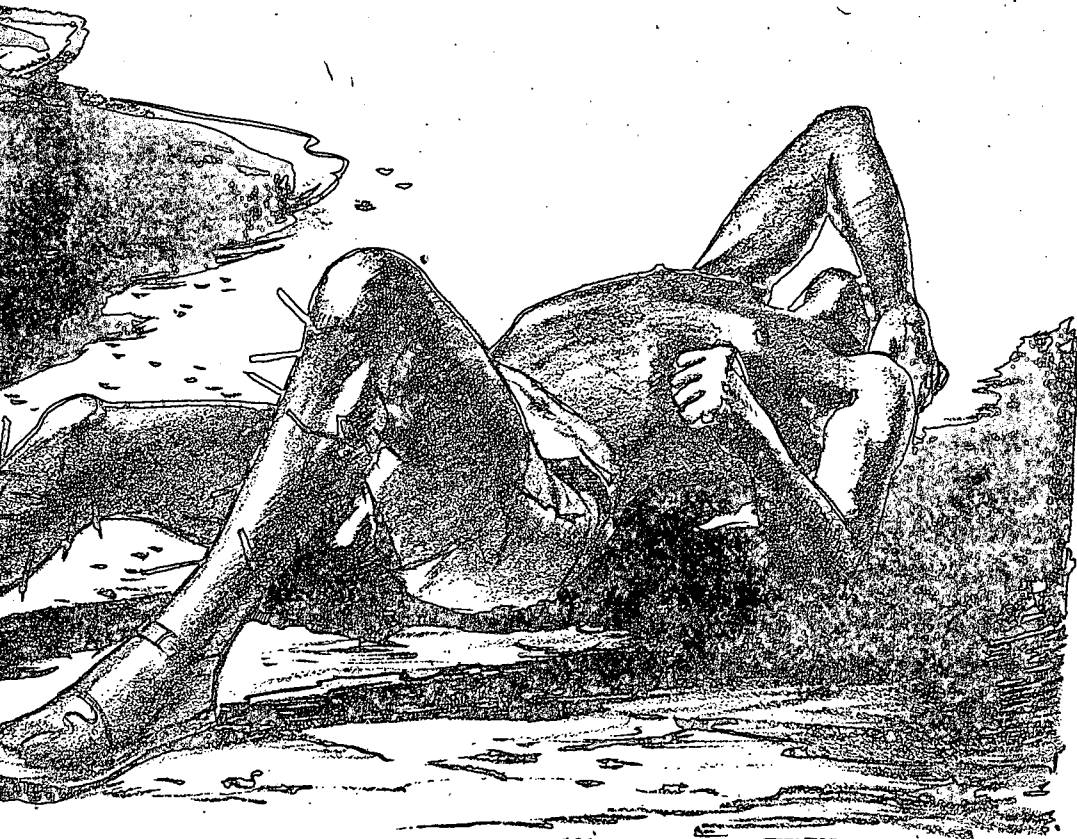
by MILES SHELTON

What was the secret of the underground ocean of Mercury? Who were its hidden inhabitants?

WE KNEW that there were human beings somewhere in this region of Mercury, for my brother had relayed that information to us shortly before he passed out of the picture.

"If you come this way, George," he had written, "follow the crow's-foot canyons till you find the underground

sea. The crimson sea, they call it. I haven't seen it yet, but I'm about to descend. They say it is inhabited by a mysterious tribe of human beings who originally came from the earth. If so, I am about to discover the answer to our grandfather's dream. Give David and Uncle Willard my greetings. Wish me luck.—Ken."



After several weeks of exploring with the aid of native scouts, we had at last found what must have been the "crow's-foot canyons." We delayed for several hours while one of those terrific Mercury storms spent itself. Torrents of warm rain spilled down through the narrow mountain crevasses. We were a dispirited party, waiting there under an overhanging ledge, wondering what adventure might await us.

My cousin David wrote a few lines to his wife and the scout assured us he would take the letter back to one of the Mercury-spaceports. David, sour-faced and humorless at twenty-three, already wished he had stayed at home. He lacked his father's spirit of adventure. Uncle Willard was bristling with eagerness to proceed.

When we descended the last of three or four miles of water-cut channels, we came into view of an inlet of the "Crimson Sea." At first glance it appeared to be a lake of rich red liquid. But this was an illusion from the light. The walls were of radiant rock, and their brightness cast a baleful red color over the waters.

At once we saw streaks of darkness moving through the smooth red surface, and David exclaimed, "Swimmers!" At that moment, although we didn't know it, we were about to become a part of the community life of the water-dwellers.

"I hope all of you can swim," Uncle Willard said more severely than he had said it before. All the way down through the mountains he had impressed us with his creed for getting along with strangers. "When in Rome, do as the Romans do," was his motto.

One of the three men who had composed our crew on Uncle Willard's private spaceship spoke up, "We must have walked nearly ten miles since we hid our ship." This was Jim Sutton. He

wore a pedometer and kept close watch on the mounting figures. He stopped.

"Can you swim, Sutton?" Uncle Willard asked.

Sutton had paused to check and he might not have heard. When he caught up he began giving us figures on the approximate foot-pounds of energy required for six men of average weight, lightened by the lesser gravity of Mercury, to descend through four miles of canyons, whose angle of descent averaged so many degrees—

"Can you swim, Sutton?" my Uncle Willard broke in sharply.

"A little."

"Can you swim a mile?"

"Oh, no. Not with all the plunder I'm carrying, plus the weight of this pedometer."

"Without any surplus weight, could you swim a quarter of a mile?"

"On the earth—no. Here on Mercury—well, I should do much better. But these clothes are pretty heavy."

"Take them off," Uncle Willard said. He was already starting to undress. "We'll make a cache here for our clothes and supplies."

WE STRIPPED down to our trunks. Uncle Willard preferred that I stay with the goods while he and the others made a first cautious survey of the ocean den.

Jim followed the others a few yards, then I saw Uncle Willard shake his head and motion Jim that he had just as well go on back.

We crawled up on a rock only ten feet above the water's edge. Jim was shuddering.

"Cold?" I asked.

"Warm," he said. "If I'm shivering it's cause I'm scared. I dreamed last night that I ran into death in just such a place as this."

"Your imagination's working over-

time. Watch the goods. I'm going to try the water."

Warm? I should say.

Red? Not at all. It seemed to be, when you'd come up in a certain light and seen the liquid dripping off your arm. But it was all a stage effect, you might say. A trick of nature. A little further out, I rounded the perpendicular shaft of stone around which Uncle Willard and the other three men had disappeared. Now I got a glimpse of that wider cavern from which a lot of the reflected light was coming.

It was only a limited view, as I later learned, but it was a breath-taker! I might have been looking into the biggest cathedral in the world, with all of its walls and ceilings glowing with a soft radiance. Its floor was water. And its people swam through the floor easily and quickly, passing each other as they went about their business.

I saw a few tubes that rose out of the surface like huge glass test tubes. These were partially filled, so that the persons who rested within them were at a somewhat higher level than those who swam the surface of the regular sea.

Uncle Willard, David, and the two crewmen now split up, each to swim off in a different direction. Presently they had disappeared around some of the projecting columns of stone. My eye tried to follow the maze of waterways, and I suddenly realized that any newcomer could get himself lost in these channels without trying. And how could you know you weren't trespassing on private property? It would be just like Uncle Willard, always bold and over-adventurous, to swim smack into trouble before he knew his grounds.

This danger must have occurred to my cousin David, for a moment later he reappeared, floundering around,

looking for the shortest way back to home base.

"Hay-ay! Father! Where are you?"

I gulped. That was a fool thing to do, I thought. When you start out to trespass on someone's property, you don't go around yelling. I did a speedy crawl. Jim Sutton was right about swimming being easy in this light gravity. A few long strokes and I was close enough to draw David's attention.

"Pipe down!" I whispered over the liquid surface. The red-crested waves seemed to carry my voice along.

"Hi, George. Oh, gollies, I thought I was off the deep end."

"Quiet, will you? Don't forget we're foreigners."

"I'm hurt," David said, swimming toward me. "A hundred spikes shot into my leg. I can't swim."

For a casualty, he was making plenty of splash. We went for the nearest shore that would accommodate us and climbed up on a flat rock. I could see that something very peculiar had happened. David's calf was stuck full of the biggest thorns I ever saw. *Live thorns—wiggling.*

They were a little larger than pencils. That's what they looked like—three or four dozen black pencils—flexible enough to vibrate—with their points stuck tight in David's flesh.

"They're fish," I said, not that my remark gave David any comfort. I pulled three of them out and David gave such a yowl of pain that I paused, waiting for him to grit his teeth. "You must have run into a whole school of them."

"They ran into me," David groaned. "I'll bet they're poison."

"They're not poison," came a feminine voice from over our heads.

A GIRL was looking down on us from a shelf of rock ten or twelve

feet overhead. I would have sworn she was smiling sweetly with not enough mischief in her manner to disturb anyone. But David must have seen her in a different light. He gave her an awful scowl, and he nudged me.

"Let's move. We didn't ask for company."

"They're not poison," the girl repeated. Her wet hair hung tight over her shoulders, but you couldn't help noticing that she was pretty and golden and plump. What she wore for a bathing suit must have been woven of seaweed and shells, and it seemed just right on her—a graceful, natural costume through which her pretty golden skin showed bright. It was better than any breathless moment in a technicolor movie.

"Those are water hornets," she said, climbing down over the rock. "If you want to remove them, come over to the warm fountain. That's the easiest way."

I don't think David cared for her offer of help, but I didn't give him a chance to refuse. I practically pushed him along over the rocks. We followed her up through a zigzag trail, with deep blue lights barely showing the way. All the while those wiggling black hornets were sticking in David's flesh like so many fish-hooks, and he was doing plenty of whimpering. I didn't blame him.

When we came to the source of the low hiss of falling water, the blue light illuminated a waterfall, and mist from the steam came up and filled our eyes. The pool under the fall was as hot as bath as David could stand. But it worked. The moment he dipped his leg in the pool, those ornery black water hornets went limp and fell away. Later, when we examined his injuries in the brighter light, the spots didn't look too serious. "See," the girl said. "No bleeding. The warm water heals everything

—everything except a broken heart, they say." She gave a little laugh. Then, "My, you are a sober one. I don't know where you come from, but you must belong to a very fierce tribe."

David wasn't quite equal to the situation. He couldn't return a smile for a smile. So I tried to fill in for him. I thanked the girl and told her to go on about her business and not to pay any attention to us. We were wanderers who had come down into these ravines out of curiosity. We wouldn't be making anyone any trouble.

This sufficed. She returned to her overhead rock. A soft, friendly smile lighted her face as she waved us goodbye. Then we were out of her sight and David turned to me fiercely.

"Now we're in for it. Father will raise the very devil with us for this. What was she doing there, anyway? Spying on us?"

"She was drying her hair. Pretty hair, too. Or did you notice?"

"I noticed that you talked too much. By now she's running home as fast as she can, to tell the tribe they're about to be invaded."

"They're going to know sooner or later," I said. "But I think you're wrong about her. She liked you, my boy. She tried to be friends."

"Cut it out."

"Does your injured leg feel better? Did you thank her? You weren't even civil."

David caught my arm and pointed back to the water. She was swimming across the inlet toward a point about a hundred yards distant.

"See. She's on her way to tell someone. Father won't like that. We can't spill the beans until Dad says so."

"The beans are spilled," I said. "You and the hornets spilled them, and the girl is doing the natural thing. She's going to spread the news."

"Then do something!"

"Me? What should I do?" I flung back at him. After all he held a higher rank in this little party than I, being two years my senior and being a son of our chosen leader, Uncle Willard Pemberton.

"Go get her. Head her off. Drown her, damn it. What do we care, just so we don't let her go and ruin our expedition."

The quickest way to ruin our expedition, I thought, would have been for me to follow David's rash suggestions. But I forgave him, in a measure, realizing he was homesick and sour. For on my part, I had thought the girl charming enough to bear further acquaintance.

"Don't just stand there! Do something," David said in a pained tone.

"As you will!" I plunged into the water. I called back, "You go back to Jim and wait there till you hear from me." Then I struck off with swift strokes toward the dark streak across the red waters that marked the trail of the girl.

CHAPTER II

"I MADE him angry, didn't I?"

These surprising words came at me soon as I caught up with her. She must have loitered deliberately and it was my guess that she had hoped David was following her, though I could have been wrong.

"He's not in a good humor today," I said. "And you caught him off his guard."

"He didn't like what I said about a broken heart, did he?"

I was sure David hadn't given that remark a thought, and I told her so. "He's homesick for someone he left back home. His wife."

"I thought so. Well, he knows noth-

ing about broken hearts then. The only kind of pain he feels is the bite of the water hornet. That's nothing."

I swam to the other side of her so I could catch the advantage of the light in her face. What a curiosity, I thought. A golden-skinned girl living in this watery cave, swimming with the ease of a champion and looking like some fabulous beauty in a movie. You'd have thought there would be a swarm of men swimming after her—and here she was talking about broken hearts.

"You've recently lost a boy friend," I said.

"How did *you* know? Who *are* you? Let me see your hands."

I lifted a hand out of the water, and she stopped swimming long enough to examine it. She must have expected to find it webbed between the fingers, for she touched each finger separately.

"You must be a stranger," she said. "I can see that you didn't come in from the great ocean. You are a land dweller, aren't you? But you swim well. I have a question to ask you."

"I have a favor to ask you," I said.

"Here's a resting place, where we can talk."

The beads of her brief swimming costume clicked against the low rock as she clambered up onto its surface.

"This is a danger rock," she said. "It's so near the surface that you could swim into it and split your head before you see it."

I was doing my best to see everything, and if I haven't already said so, there was plenty to see. I meant to catch my bearings in this watery wilderness of rock towers and caverns, but I could hardly take my eyes off the girl. I felt pretty awkward as I sat beside her. What David had said worried me. I cleared my throat.

"My name is George. My friends and I came here to see the sights."

"Um-m."

"They're nice," I said.

"My name is Loonza."

"It's a pretty name."

"That's not all of it."

"What's the rest?"

"Loonza-Lenza-Linza-Lee."

"My gosh. That's lots of name."

"It came from the water. It's the waves coming into a certain tiny little bay on the other side of the Black Ledge. That's the song the water sings." She recited it in a singsong voice. "Loonza . . . lenza . . . linza . . . lee . . . Pretty?"

"Sounds kinda looney to me." I was far more fascinated than I cared to admit. "Do they ever tease you and call you Looney?"

"What's looney?"

"Dippy. Goofy. Silly. It comes from *luna*—moon. I studied it in Latin. If you take a notion you want the moon, you're looney, that's for sure."

"The moon? What's the moon?"

I GLANCED around at the wide expanse of rock ceiling that must have extended over a square mile or more of water. There was no sky in this underground world—and the heavenly body I had in mind was a world away.

"We'll skip the moon," I said. "This natural radiation has all of the magic of moonlight, and more. Tell me, is it daytime or night-time, or do you know the difference down here?"

"Oh, of course. It's night now. You can tell by the level of the water. When the tide begins to rise, and the water comes in on you, where you're sleeping, and wakes you up—then it's day."

"What about all this glowing light?"

"If you want darkness you swim away from it. Don't you know anything?"

"Where I come from, the sun goes down every night. Then if you want

more light, you turn it on. If you want no light, you turn it off."

Loonza-Lenza-Linza-Lee gave me an imploring look. She touched my hand and said, "Please don't say such things."

"Why not?"

"I like you, George, and I want to trust you. But I've heard such stories before and I never believe them. *Light never changes.*"

"Never?"

"Never. If this rock glows red today, the tide can come and go a thousand times. It will still glow the same red, no more, no less."

There was such intensity in Loonza's voice that I told myself I'd better steer clear of any argument. "What was the question you wanted to ask me?"

"How did you learn to talk my language?"

"I could ask you that one. It's *my* language, you know. People on my part of the earth all speak it."

She nodded happily. "Oh, then we've come from the same place. I mean my grandfathers a few generations back—they came from the earth. I've studied all about it in my classes."

Classes? I thought of asking, just for a gag, whether the people swam in schools, like fish. But we were both sufficiently confused about each other, without adding complications.

"You were going to ask me a favor," she said.

"Yes, and a very important one. Suppose I don't want anyone—not anyone—to know that David and I and our friends are visiting here."

"Why not?"

I could have answered that with a sarcastic reference to David's suspicions. But I preferred not to cross him, even in my mind. After all, his father had been good enough to undertake this expedition. We had hoped, from the

moment we hit Mercury, that we would be able to pick up the trail of my lost brother somewhere along the line. It was Uncle Willard's idea that we'd better look in on this tribe from the outside before we burst in and started asking questions. My brother Kenneth might have walked into a pitfall with death at the bottom of it. That, indeed, is exactly what David feared we were doing.

"No why-nots at present," I said. "Just make me the promise. Wherever you go and whomever you see, you'll say not one word about any strangers being here. That's the favor. Promise?"

She gave me a tantalizing smile, and I thought to myself, this battle is lost. She'll swing right out to the biggest pool and tell everybody.

"I'm ready to promise," she said. "Is there a special way to promise where you come from?"

Maybe I was the looney one; maybe it was red and blue waves that made me dizzy. Anyway I mumbled something about—well, I said we *could* seal the promise with a kiss.

"That's a good way to seal an understanding—where I come from," I added. "Of course, you don't know what a kiss is—"

"Oh, don't I?"

"So I'll have to show you. First I put my arm around you like this—"

She moved out of my reach quickly. "You think I don't *know*? How do you think I got that broken heart?" She rose, looking at me so fiercely that I felt a fool for trying to take such an advantage. I rose and stood awkwardly. She bent down to notice the level of the water.

"The night's almost over. I'll have to hurry home. My parents don't know but what I'm sleeping . . . But I couldn't sleep."

"I hope—I hope I see you again. And I hope—I wish—"

"What?"

"That I could ask you to keep the promise—not to tell."

She tossed her hair over her golden shoulders and gave me a smile that moonlight couldn't have improved. She was a perfect statue, beautifully formed—and for a moment I forgot to breathe.

"But the promise should be sealed, even if I do have a broken heart," she said.

I started toward her. She kissed me, quickly, warmly, and then slipped out of my arms and dived into the water. She swam away so fast I'd never have overtaken her—even if I had tried. But I was still standing there, my arms extended, my fingers trembling.

CHAPTER III

THE dark look that came up out of the water was David Pemberton. He must have swum across silently during the last of my scene with Loonza.

"I trust you followed my order, George," he said with tight sarcasm in his voice that made me sure he had taken in the last of our visit. "Did you find it necessary to drown her—or only tie and gag her?"

"Oh, hello, David." I tried to say it coldly. But these gentle tropical waters were getting a grip on me—or something. "How *are* you, David?" My voice was full of unnatural honey.

"I'm not very well."

"No, don't come up on *this* rock, David. This is a *sacred* rock. You shouldn't touch it. There's another—here, this way David. Here's a nice cool rock. Now, what's on your little mind? Have you noticed the gorgeous scenery? Gorgeous colors, Gorgeous—that's the word."

"I'm not interested in scenery."

"No—no, our tastes are quite different. Sometimes I can hardly believe we're cousins."

"You're talking like an idiot."

"I'm looney—don't mind me—that's how it is."

"George, snap out of it. Do you know that they have found a coat that belonged to your brother Ken?"

That sobered me. For an instant a paralysis caught me. I had spent countless hours in sorrow over the loss of my brother. After his communications ceased to come through, about two years ago, I had only one choice and that was to conclude that he had been lost.

"Where did they find it?"

"Come over to the shore and my father will tell you about it." We swam through the red water. It was hard for me to break the sudden numbness that had seized my body. The recent visit with Loonza seemed a travesty upon the higher purpose of my coming here. I felt ashamed. David, observing my sudden change of mood, glowed with triumph.

"All right, now maybe you will attend to business."

We clambered up on the dark rocks into a small cave which Uncle Willard had decided to make our headquarters. He was beside himself with excitement. He and two of the crewmen had captured a small boy—a lad of ten with frightened eyes and very curious hands and feet. The boy sat back in a dark corner of the cave waiting to see what would happen.

"Where did they get you?" I asked, going over to him. He was observing my hands just as I was observing his. He appeared to pity me because I lacked the neat webs between my fingers which would facilitate swimming in this watery world.

"What do you want with me?" the boy mumbled.

"Keep quiet, you," my Uncle said. "We'll get to you in a minute. Come here, George. I want to tell you what we saw. Do you remember that blue and yellow striped sports jacket that your brother used to wear? Well, we saw it. They're using it over by the market. Using it for a net or something. They had it hooked up a few feet above the water. It looked like it was full of fish or something. But it's the coat. I'd know it anywhere."

I said I would like to see it at once. "Do you think it means that Ken—"

"It means he has been here. That's all."

David added to his father's observation, "It means he's been checked off. They never would have got that jacket away from him if he were still alive."

"Just the same, I'd like to see it."

THEY turned to the boy. They inquired about his webbed hands and feet and he told them that almost all of the people here were *webbed*. This seemed incomprehensible at first. My impression, from the stories of my grandfather, was that this colony had begun with a single spaceship load of passengers. If, as I had reason to believe, the entire tribe around this Crimson Sea were descendants of earth people, only three generations removed from their native land, there should be no reason for any radical changes in their physical structure.

Uncle Willard pursued this question. "Were you born that way?"

The boy shook his head. "They graft that onto us when we're five years old. We can't hope to be good swimmers unless we have good hands and feet."

My uncle insisted that he was a champion swimmer himself. This

caused the boy to laugh.

"You can't swim, mister. You never would have caught me if I hadn't been sound asleep."

This did little to quiet my uncle's noisy manner. He was feeling much too victorious over the success of this first incident. The boy was his, and he meant to press him for all the information he could get. How many people were there in this lost world? How did they live? What did they eat? How did they govern themselves? Who were the big-shots?

The boy's version, while fragmentary, was satisfactory as a preliminary survey. We learned of the fourteen hundred people here, more than half were children. And these were the descendants, so the boy had learned from his history lessons, of only one hundred families who originally took refuge here.

"We never swim out into the ocean. Our parents won't let us. But some of them go out to fish. No, I've never been hungry. There's always a feast after Mong's ships come back from the big ocean."

"Where is the big ocean?"

"You have to swim under the Black Ledge before you see it. Once, when the tide was real low, I was there. But it was so bright out there that I was afraid."

So it was apparent that the denizens of this great ocean cavern were content to remain here, seldom if ever viewing the outside world. Our questions about the passages up to the surface, through which we had descended, brought a similar answer. The children had never ventured far. And the adults who had been most adventurous, had been turned back, as a rule, by the brightness of the light.

I saw that David was growing impatient for a chance to tell Uncle Wil-

lard about my visit with Loonza.

"I'm going to swim out and take a look at that jacket," I said abruptly. Uncle Willard was too busy with the boy to protest. I climbed down from the entrance of the cave and dived into the water.

Out in the wider reaches of the great cavern, it was now daytime. The tide had risen and with it the people of the Crimson Sea had wakened to the business of a new day. I proceeded cautiously, for I didn't want any more surprise encounters.

From across the water I heard a low musical note—thoom . . . thoom . . . thoom . . .

Swimming closer, I observed that this was a part of the market. Some enterprising fellow was drumming up trade, and the customers were swimming in from several directions. Then I saw. Within the brighter yellow and orange light along the shoreline of the market, there hung an object which resembled an inverted umbrella. Its stripes of blue and yellow shown clearly. To these people it may have been a net full of fish. But to me it was Ken's coat.

II MADE use of the shadows of rocks along the shore. No telling how far or how well these people could see in this strange light. I didn't care to be discovered. But my curiosity drove me on.

Swish . . . swish . . . swish . . . The swimmers were all equipped, as the boy had been, with fin-like extensions of their fingers and toes. This was strange. I was certain that Loonza had not been treated to this particular improvement upon nature. And I wondered why she should be an exception.

Another ten strokes, then I ducked for the shadows again. A party of five or six persons were swimming in my direction, chattering excitedly. One of

the women was fairly screeching. Such a thing had never happened before, she said.

"He's my only boy. And he never runs away from home. Every morning he waits until I've had breakfast with him. I can't understand it."

The others of the party tried to comfort her. After all, a ten-year old boy was likely to chase out into the dark waters once in a while without his mother's permission.

"No, I tell you, he has gotten into trouble. Maybe it was one of the sea monsters—"

"Stop talking that way. You'll have the whole community in a panic."

They were on their way to report to one of their officials, I gathered. And I knew that it concerned the loss of the boy that Uncle Willard had temporarily kidnapped.

As soon as they had passed, I struck out in the direction from which I had come. If Uncle Willard meant to avoid contact with these people as long as possible, he had better make up for this kidnapping somehow—and soon.

It was lucky that I turned back. When I climbed up to the edge of the cave I discovered that Uncle Willard and David were having a regular knock-down-dragout fight with the youngster. David dived for his feet and held him. Uncle Willard was looking for something to tie him with. And the boy was screeching and whipping the air with his fists. Those fists were no good at striking. He could claw, he could bat at the air, but he avoided injuring the delicately webbed fingers. It was an unfair fight and I stormed in with every intention of settling it fairly.

"Lay off that boy!" I snapped. I'm not too clear on what I did then. But my fists collided with David's jaws two or three times—enough that he fell back looking sour and hurt. And Uncle Wil-

lard, gathering himself up for a tirade, held his peace long enough for me to get my word in.

"You've got no business handling the kid this way. Give him a chance. He's done you the favor of answering your questions, hasn't he?"

The boy saw his chance to slip past me and he went on the fly. He jumped from the cave entrance. Splash! He was away.

You should have seen the devil in Uncle Willard's eye.

"That shouldn't have happened," he said with remarkable restraint. "We'll have a hellova bill to pay for that slip. The whole ocean den will know we're here."

David spoke up then. "That's the second slip. George pulled the first faux pas just before you returned."

"Go ahead," I said. "Give him the worst."

"The worst is that our dear cousin George had a very pleasant little conversation with a pretty girl who was spying on us," said David, making a sour face.

"I made a friend," I said defensively. "Loonza is a charming person."

"It ended in some kind of pledge that had to be sealed with an embrace," David added, giving me a disgusted look.

Uncle Willard glared at me in despair. "This is bad. I don't understand it. You've sold us out, George . . . So that's the thanks David and I get for trying to run down your lost fortune. You're going to ruin our chances with such indiscretions."

I was pretty thoroughly silenced and badly whipped. I mumbled something about circumstances altering our destinies, but Uncle Willard just sat there, shaking his head and idly pouring grains of dirt through his hands. Then he flung the dirt at the wall, sprang up

and began to pace. "I give up," he said. "We've come all the way to Mercury to try to find some trace of your brother. And the fortune. You know better than anyone what's at stake. You know—and I know—that that first and only load of the Mercury material brought a cool four million dollars when it was sprung on the market. And that was before its full value was known. It should have been *your* four million—or rather your great-grandfather's. But his stepbrother turned a villainous trick and it got away from you."

"I've read all about it," I said calmly.

"And so—here we are."

David threw a pebble into the corner. The three crewmen climbed up, bringing the rest of our equipment. They stared at us, sensing that someone had called time-out. We stared back at them blankly, as glum as bumps on logs.

"Pick up the baggage," Uncle Willard said so abruptly that the surprised crewmen jumped. "We're going to have to go back farther into the hills. Until these bungling boneheads blow over, we'll have to hide out and wait."

CHAPTER IV

TWO days, as gauged by Uncle Willard's lazy wristwatch, was a long time to wait. Especially in the company of two angry relatives. I broke away while Uncle Willard and David were sleeping, and went back down toward the shore town in the hope of finding Loonza again. After several hours of scouting, I spied her swimming along toward the rock where we had sat and talked before.

I plunged in and swam across to meet her. She didn't appear surprised. In fact, her first words were, "Where have you been hiding?"

"I've got to talk with someone," I said, "and I think it had better be you." She looked pleased and pretty, and I wondered if Uncle Willard could have refused to be friendly if he had had the privilege of sitting beside a beautiful bathing beauty like Loonza. The soft glowing lights—the whispering waters—"Does the village know they have visitors?"

"Yes, but *I* didn't tell."

"The boy told," I said.

"You know about him?"

"I stopped the fight just as they were about to beat up on him."

"You were the one. I was sure of it. He told me it was the handsome, tall one with the kind face and—"

"And what?"

"And the ugly hands."

"Why, the brat!"

"He thinks my hands are ugly too, because I've never had fins grafted on them." She extended her fingers, and I took the liberty of examining them as she talked on. "Almost everyone wears webbed hands and feet. But my father told me that some day there would be a man from the outside world who would come and see me, and he would appreciate—"

She stopped short and withdrew her hand.

"Go on," I said.

"No, I shouldn't be telling you all this. The important thing is that you—"

"That I have ugly hands?"

"No. That's only what my brother said. But he's always making remarks. The important thing is that you were kind to him and stopped the fight."

"*Your brother?*"

"It put me in an awfully embarrassing position because of that promise I made you. You see," she was looking at me with large sincere eyes, "I never

keep anything from my brother. Not anything. And this time I had to hold back the most interesting thing—the fact that I already knew you.”

“Well, if that’s how it is—” I weighed the matter, and made the bold decision that Uncle Willard certainly wouldn’t have approved. “All right, we’ll let the little fellow in on it. Any brother of yours is a friend of mine. I’ve a lot to tell you. If he were here right now, I’d let you both in on my story.”

A small voice piped up from the other side of the stone. “Hi, Sis. Pard—don me, mister. Do you mind if I come around where I can hear better?”

“There you are!” Loonza sighed. “That’s Bud for you. Come on, you mischief. I should have known you’d be spying.”

WE SAT together, the three of us, and only when Bud wasn’t watching too closely would my hand stray over to touch Loonza’s. But she wasn’t being drawn into anything that called for holding hands, I decided. She was much too interested in my story and growing troubles with the Pembertons.

“You see, Willard Pemberton and his son would be next in line for the Freeman inheritance if there weren’t any Freeman living,” I explained. They looked too happy about it, so I tried to simplify my explanation. “I’m a Freeman. My brother was a Freeman—”

“Naturally.”

“And we’re the only two left. Neither of us is married. So you see why I’m beginning to lose sleep.”

“You mean because you’re not married?” Bud said. “That’s too bad.”

“No, no, no. I mean because there are so few of us in line for the fortune. If my brother has passed on—and that’s what he probably has—then I’m the only one.”

“And all this expedition is for your benefit?” said Loonza brightly.

“Yes—that is—*unless* my uncle and his son have a funny notion that something *might* happen to me. In that case, they would get all the benefit.”

“What could happen to you?”

“Whatever happened to my brother could happen to me, I suppose.”

“What happened to him?” Bud asked, bright-eyed.

“I don’t know. I only know he came down here and that’s the last we ever heard. I may never know. He may have gone straight to your high mogul—or king—or what have you—”

“We have the great Mong,” said Bud.

“All right, he may have gone to the Mong and asked what happened to the Freeman fortune, and the Mong may have been in a bad mood and chopped his head off.”

“Our Mong doesn’t do it that way,” said Bud.

“Quiet,” said Loonza. “What did your brother look like? Did he have a deep voice and nice wavy brown hair that swept back from his forehead?”

“Yes! Have you seen him?”

“Did he have brown cheeks and a jaw like a rock? Was he a little taller than you?”

“You’re right on the beam.”

“Did he know how to kiss?”

“I think he originated it,” I said. And then I gulped. “Kiss? What are you saying, Loonza? Do you mean—he—was it he—was he the one?”

Loonza dived into the water and started swimming away.

I started after her. But Bud caught my arm.

“Let her alone. She’s going off to have a cry. When women swim off for a cry, that’s the wrong time for us men to bother them.”

I had had about all the shaking up

I could stand for one day. I'll be frank about it; this Loonza gal had me going. And all I really knew about her was that she was nursing a broken heart—as she put it. She had been friendly enough with me—Yes. But it was plain that I had exaggerated the importance of that. Loonza had been in love with Ken!

I sat there mumbling to myself until Bud thumped me on the arm. "If you're going to talk, can't you talk out loud?"

"What happened to him, Bud?" I asked.

"Same thing that happens to all strangers," he said.

"What? Tell me."

"It might spoil your dinner."

"Go ahead."

He had me swim with him across to a place where we could climb about half way up toward the cavern ceiling.

Along the way he showed me how to use climbing glue that could be gathered off the rocks just below the surface of the water. We padded upward until we could get a fair squirrel's eye view of the great cavern. Far across the mist, where the line of markets ended and the walls curved in and out among the towers of rock, he pointed out a purple line along the surface of the water.

"That's a sort of turtle walk," he said, "only they call it the 'Leopard Walk.' Don't ask me what a leopard is. I've never seen one. But that's what someone named it a long time ago."

I COULD see the reason for the name, for the perpendicular walls beyond were blotched with spots of yellow light. It was like a huge leopard coat in reverse. The walk was the straight purple line at the surface of the water.

"A water gate rises along that line," he said. "When they let you go to see

the Mong, you're supposed to be able to walk across the tower of rock beyond. The Twisted Arm. Do you see it?"

Twisted Arm was a perfect name for it. It was a thick vertical column of rock shaped like an arm, and it must have been hollow. The arm rose into a square palm which separated into fingers, like gigantic stalagmites that had grown up to the ceiling. Between the fingers, the level floor of a porch could be seen. Elsewhere there were windows cut in the arm.

"The Mong lives in the Twisted Arm. And if the guards let you go to see him, you walk across the Leopard Walk. But you're lucky if you get across."

"What happens?"

"The water gate rises, and no one in the village is supposed to know just what happens. But *something* happens, so that you're never seen again and that's what happened to your brother."

I stared, wondering. Finally, "So you've never actually seen anyone walk through?"

Bud didn't answer directly. He told me to look along a certain profile of tower rocks until I saw a certain niche with a blue scar at the side.

"If you are good enough at climbing you can see the whole show from up there," he said.

"You've seen it?"

He nodded. "I can tell you this much, don't ever try to walk through. If they ever send you through, dive and swim for it the minute the water comes in behind the gate."

"So that's where my brother came to an end," I said, trying to visualize the horrible something that Bud had refused to describe.

"He was with a party of about twenty," said Bud. "There were six Paint-Faces standing by to start them off—Mong's guards, you understand, and

nobody ever doubts a Paint-Face. You'll meet them before long."

Bud told me more. He knew about the magician, Propsander, who was the Mong's chief assistant. And he knew about the fine foods and the luxurious tile-walled rooms and the little private pool which the Twisted Arm contained, like a fancy penthouse at the top of the tower, for the luxury of the Mong and his guests. And he mentioned too, as I was to recall later, the ornaments of white bars—chalky white—*bleached* white—but these words passed over my head for the present, for I was still mentally engrossed in imagining the awful end of my brother's well-planned expedition.

Bud tried to lift my low spirits by making a bright suggestion.

"Do you want to see my treasure? I can show you something that will surprise you."

We avoided the light as much as possible as we climbed along the mountainous walls. His treasures were in a deep crevice between two towers of rock, not far from the opening of a narrow passage to the water's edge.

"None of the boys have ever found this place," he said proudly. "They always play at the other side of town. I got away with my prize treasure without anyone ever seeing. Do you believe in stealing, George?"

"Certainly not."

"I don't either. This is the only thing I ever stole. I stole it the day your brother and the rest of the party went under. That was a long time ago. The Mong never missed it. Or the Paint-Faces either, though they probably argued over the count."

"The count?"

No. He was talking over my head again.

"There were several. I only took one." He slid some rocks aside and

lifted a clean, white, life-sized skeleton of a man. I caught a quick breath and understood.

"This one might be your brother," he said. "I was under water when I stole it and I took the first one I came to. It took a lot of fast under water swimming to get away without being spotted. Those Paint-Faces would have given me a hundred days of mud jail if they had caught me."

I lifted the skeleton with a feeling of awe mixed with tenderness. It was about the height and build of Ken. As the boy had said, it *could* have been.

"You're looking awfully puzzled, George. Maybe you don't understand why I'd want to steal such a thing. But it's like having some of the Mong's own ornaments. It almost puts me in the same class with a king. Do you think I ought to give it back?"

"Have you told Loonza about this?"

"I didn't dare. She wouldn't let me steal, ever. And besides, she would know that this might be her friend."

CHAPTER V

I RETURNED to camp with the intention of eavesdropping on the rest of the party. I discovered that they had moved again; and later I found that they had reoccupied the small cave above the water's edge.

The climbing glue was just the thing to enable me to explore the dark interior of these premises. Around at the rear, I found, to my delight, a sort of natural lattice in the stone. Through it I could see the figure of Uncle Willard, tall and broad shouldered and a trifle bent, more with eagerness than with age. He was pacing back and forth. David was sitting moodily against the wall. Two of the crewmen—Casey and Blanchard—were cleaning up after a meal. David was grum-

bling because I hadn't returned.

"Jim may find him," Uncle Willard said.

"Jim can't swim far with all that plunder he insists on carrying."

"He'll have to learn if he's going to keep pace with us."

"If George has strayed too far, no one will find him, as far as I'm concerned," David growled.

The two crewmen stopped and looked at each other, and I knew that this sort of talk didn't appeal to them. It didn't appeal to me either. I had bent over backward trying to play fair with David, in spite of his moods.

"Jim will stop along the way to see whether his pedometer is running true in this Mercury gravity," Casey suggested, as if to overlook any slighting thing that had been implied by David.

"He's never sure whether he's going forward or backward without consulting his instruments," Blanchard added. They joked freely about Jim's eccentricities. Jim had struck out to swim, wearing the pedometer, trying to see whether he could work out a gauge of distance in the water by counting the number of strokes.

"He'll not come back until he's looked in on the high mogul of this village," David said.

"How do you know?"

"I talked with him before he left. I can read him like a book."

"Did you order him to look in on the authorities?"

"It was in his mind to do that," said David. "I told him if he did, he was taking his own chances—but if he succeeded, he'd be a hero."

Uncle Willard was concerned. He decided they should climb to an observation point and take a gander with the field glasses. A sudden horror struck through me. Was it possible that Jim, seeking me at the tower of the Mong,

would encounter some of the Paint-Faces and be directed to the Leopard Walk?

"We'd just as well let him serve as a test case," said David. "If he gets through to the Mong then we can all get through. If he has trouble—well, my guess is, he *will* have trouble—and whatever happens, we can benefit by it."

"You sound pretty heartless," Casey said, stopping again to stare at the young lieutenant. "You wouldn't want to lose Jim, would you?"

"Just get on with your work, and we'll take care of the welfare programs," said David haughtily. But his father struck a saner note.

"No, we don't want to lose Jim. We don't want to lose any of you. We may have a full cargo of ghagstic on the return trip and we'll need all hands."

"Ghagstic?"

"Never mind, Casey. If you haven't heard of it, you're going to. There are two ways we can work it to get our load. Either the Mong of this land can concede it to us as our right, or we can slip through from the ocean side and get it. The boy said there was an ocean entrance—"

"Under the Black Ledge," said David.

"You'll find your crew agreeable," Casey said, trying to make up for lost ground. "Whatever you men and George decide, that's what we and Jim will do. But any time you think we should help you find George and Jim, we're ready."

"We'll look about them," said Uncle Willard abruptly. "Come on, David."

THE two men skirted the shore as close to the water's edge as possible, and occasionally they would have to swim a short distance to pass the perpendicular walls. I began to discover

the use of the upland trails near the ceiling, and I found a distinct advantage in traveling this route. The sounds would waft up to my level. An old fisherman swam in from some small rocky islands with a fish basket streaming with his catch. Uncle Willard and David were forced to stop and talk with him. And their words came to me clearly.

"Sure, I recollect seeing one of your party," said the old man, rubbing his fin-like hand over his wet baldish head. "I heard him ask the Paint-Faces the way to the town authority and they conducted him to the Leopard Walk."

"I hope it isn't dangerous," Uncle Willard said.

"I can see you don't know anything about this world. Dangerous? Umm-m-m. It's known to be a very great honor to go over the Leopard Walk to the Mong's tower. All apart from the danger involved. Yes, it's a very permanent honor . . ."

I didn't wait to hear more. I have visions of Jim's going down in some sort of death trap or falling victim to some ocean monster. But before I could clamber far along my perilous trail, the others had already outdistanced me. They swam wide to bypass the village, so that they approached the area of the Twisted Arm from an unseen angle. I stopped, narrowed my eyes toward the brightly colored waters, and then I saw the horror which they surely saw, about one hundred yards to my right.

The purple water gates slowly descended into a harmless looking line at the surface, and there was left, revealed in his full whiteness of form, *the skeleton of Jim Sutter*.

There was no question about his identity. In death, he still held his shuffling pose. Whatever sea creatures had stripped him of his flesh, they had

not done away with the single swimming garment that clung to his pelvic bones; nor had they molested the pedometer fastened to his right leg. The waters fell away, and he stood, his skull a gleaming white, his gaunt frame trembling a little as the waves struck at his ankles. He began to sag.

His feet were caught in some jelly-like substance.

Uncle Willard and David, fifty feet or so below me, stood like statues, and I thought I could hear David's awe-struck whisper . . .

Farther on, at the shore line, three Paint-Faces walked out, seemingly having no trouble whatever crossing the purple line. They reached the skeleton. They deftly cut a block of the crystal substance which had trapped his feet. Then they lifted him—crystal base and all—and carried him on over to the circular door of the Twisted Arm tower. The door opened, they entered, and the door closed. That, I somehow knew, would be the last that anyone would ever see of Jim Sutter.

Uncle Willard and David returned slowly and you could tell by their manner of conversing that they were weighing some heavy and difficult problem.

Once I heard Uncle Willard say, "It's not a decision to be made in haste. He's young. He's pliable. He's not a bad hearted boy. And he is your own cousin. Besides, he's offered to give us half a million apiece. That's generous enough."

"It lacks a lot of being four million," David said. "Why can't we be practical?"

And later, when I could hear them again, David was saying, "It will be as easy as snapping your fingers. No one will know. He'll walk right into it and it will all be over—just like it was for Jim Sutter."

CHAPTER VI

I EAVESDROPPED again at the stone lattice before slipping quietly into the water and swimming up to the cave for a casual entrance. That way I knew that I was going to find everyone at home except Jim Sutter. I knew, too, that neither of the crewmen had as yet been told what had happened. They sensed something ominous in the air, however, for they were solemn and apprehensive.

"Thank goodness, *you've* come, anyhow," Casey said, as I climbed up over the edge.

"Did you see anything of Jim Sutter?" David asked innocently. He put on a fine show of being anxious over Jim's well-being.

"I have a hunch you know where he is," I said coolly.

"Anyone can have hunches," said David. "I've had a hunch all afternoon that he has been attending to your business while you're skylarking around with that Loonza dame again. How's that for a hunch?"

"I do get around," I said.

"Dress," said Uncle Willard.

"I beg your pardon."

"Dress. It's high time you paid your respects to his honor the Mong."

"Has it all been arranged?" I asked. "Do I have an appointment? Does the Mong want me to come in a full dress suit? A swimming suit with white tie and tails, perhaps."

"You're the man who has the inheritance at stake. We've brought you down here. It's up to you to go ahead with the business."

"We're reversing our policy rather suddenly, aren't we?" I protested. "I thought we were going to keep our presence a secret from these folks."

"Until we knew our grounds—yes. Now we know our grounds," said Uncle

Willard. He snapped his fingers nervously. "The Mong lives in a stone tower. You don't swim to it. You walk across."

"Er—have you seen his nibs?"

"I sent Jim in advance," said Uncle Willard. "I didn't tell any of you, but that's where Jim went. I arranged that he should go and break the ice. If the Mong wasn't willing to see you, Jim was to come back and report within an hour. He isn't back, so that means that he has set the stage for you to follow."

Casey was shaking his head. He muttered that Uncle Willard might have said something before and saved them all a lot of worry. Uncle Willard's sharp cough hushed him.

I began to dress. "Which of you gentlemen is accompanying me?"

"I'll go," said Casey and Blanchard together.

"We'll let George go alone," said Uncle Willard. "If he finds the hospitality ample, we'll follow."

I skirted the shore and waded through the shallows, looking back occasionally to make sure that two of my party were keeping me in view. So this was to be their farewell to me. And their welcome to my fortune!

I had left them with a stinging remark that must have tantalized them. I had offered a solid handshake to each, saying "You've been noble and generous, Uncle Willard and Cousin David, bringing me here. If this interview goes well, I'll increase your share. Yes, that's how I feel toward you."

Uncle Willard had winced, but David had looked very stony and had only urged me to hurry on.

"If I should have some accident along the way—if I shouldn't be back as soon as you expect—don't wait too long, please. I'm sure the Mong will be glad to meet both of you."

Now I knew they had followed, and they were watching as I stopped to consult the Paint-Faces a few yards from the Leopard Walk.

I TOOK a long look at the two curiously painted guards. They were taking me in, too, in more ways than one. Outwardly, they welcomed me to make an excursion across the walk.

"Your curiosity prompts you to try the entrance to the Mong's tower, I presume," one of them said, suppressing a mocking smile. His face, coated with heavy lines of black and yellow paint, quite obliterated his features. The design made it quite impossible to guess what he might have looked like, unpainted. I recalled the eye-deception tricks in some long forgotten puzzle book.

His striped face gave an ugly twist which might have been, under unpainted circumstances, a wry smile. "Curiosity. That's every stranger's reason for knocking at the Mong's door. Curiosity or business."

"I have some business," I said.

"I hope it isn't urgent," said the other Paint-Face. "It will take you about two or three hours to cross."

"Two or three hours!" I gauged the distance along what appeared to be a purple concrete sidewalk just about six inches below the water's surface. It's not more than a sixty-yard walk."

"Distances are deceiving. Sometimes the waters seep through."

"Seep!" said the other. "Seep like a waterfall! But don't be discouraged. Just keep going. In two or three hours the Mong will see you."

"And if you offer him any business propositions, the chances are he'll see *right through you*." The Paint-Face gave his companion a nudge.

They were a strange pair of wags, I thought. Husky boys with all the con-

fidence in the world — though their world was limited. Their shoulders were painted bright colors, in different designs, with names painted over their backs, as if their hidden faces had to be compensated for by some other means of identification. They were thoroughly enjoying the send-off they were giving me.

I waved them farewell, turned, and stepped out into the water-covered passage. The wall rose swiftly all along the right side of the walk. The swish of waters sounded like escaping steam. The wall was a barrier of the famous ghagstic, whose plastic form and metallic qualities would some day find a thousand uses. Its present use was, first, to contain a rush of water which would presently pour in from the ocean; and second, to screen the victims of this walk from the view of the shoreline town. For the moment I was out of sight of the guards, the town, and—doubtless—David and his father as well. But I didn't walk. I seized my opportunity. I dived into the water, turned and swam under the surface toward the nearest shore as hard as I could go. The clothing was cumbersome; but as I had observed, swimming was a much easier process against the Mercury gravity. My breath held tight. My strength stayed with me. Soon I reached a shore line, followed it until the light through the bright waters deepened into shadows, then rose cautiously to the surface.

No, the guards couldn't see me from here.

My error! They had mounted a platform on the level with the water gate's ridge, and they were peering into the waves trying to discover what had happened to me. I caught a breath and ducked under. I climbed along the shore until I came to an opening *under* the surface. What a pleasant surprise!

It led up into a dimly lighted chamber which centuries of waves had hollowed out of the rock. I entered.

I rose, gasping for breath, and was relieved to see that the hidden chamber was unoccupied. I breathed deep.

It had been occupied recently, that was plain; for the air was stuffy. It would take another low tide to change that. But I wasn't being choosy. For the moment it was just the piece of luck I needed, and I didn't intend to loiter long.

It was a Paint-Face station, apparently. The painting equipment was strewn around on rock shelves—pigments and brushes. There were numerous relics stored around in corners. Best of all—there was a skeleton! This was luck.

I CLIMBED out of my wet clothes.

Stripped to my trunks, I went to work with the paints. Two or three hours, the Paint Faces had said. If they didn't worry too much over my disappearance, I would have plenty time to do a careful job. By now the waters were piling against the gate, I knew, for the level of water was rising toward the shelf-like floor of this chamber.

I smeared a name on my back—the first name that came to me—George. I doubted whether anyone could read my crooked letters, and I hoped they wouldn't try. Yet I couldn't quite imagine keeping my back turned to every one all the time. If I could just get myself sufficiently decorated to pass through the danger area without being accosted—

"There'll surely be at least one or two Georges among those painted guards," I said to myself.

The watery entrance heaved and splashed. I ducked back into a corner and drew myself close against the wall.

Two guards popped up—the same two who had given me a send-off. They would certainly notice my heap of water-soaked clothes on the floor. Or would they? I held my breath.

"Here's the fork," one of them said. "But I don't think we'll ever overtake him now. I don't see how he got away."

"I tell you a sea lizzard dragged him off before his feet caught in the ghagstic."

"Did you see it happen?"

"No, but by the time we got to look, he was gone."

"We shouldn't lose him. He'd be a good specimen."

They grabbed small harpoons with coils of rope attached and then ducked under and were gone again.

I was breathing short and hard. I hastily finished the job of painting my face and neck, and then discovered that my name across my back had smeared to illegibility. But I couldn't take any more pains with that now. The air was stifling, and time was getting away fast.

Hurriedly I seized the skeleton and dressed him in my clothing. This was a piece of luck I hadn't counted on.

Dressing the old boy gave me trouble, for his two feet were stuck solid in the ghagstic base, just as though he'd been torn out of a glass sidewalk while the glass was cooling. But I managed to crack the base around his feet, and eventually he was dressed in my best travel togs. Now—was I ready to venture forth again?

In my trunks and war paint, quite unrecognizable even to myself, I now swam down into the water again, taking my dressed skeleton with me.

A breath of good air—ah! The guards were rounding a bend within the channels beyond the Twisted Arm tower. The field was mine again. What I did then was sure to cause those boys some consternation on their return, but

it very much needed to be done. I swam to the water gate and plunked my bony friend down into the substance that now covered the purple walk. Just as I had expected! Ghagstic—in a molten form. Like syrup. The purple walk had been covered with a layer of it. It must have poured itself automatically out of the gate, all along the Leopard Walk. If I had stepped on that walk now, I would have probably stayed right there, until the fish ate my flesh away. That, naturally, was the whole idea—but it wasn't my idea!

Instead, I planted my skeleton. His shoes went in solid. He was over his head in the water—for by now the level had risen about seven feet above the level of the larger Crimson Sea. Within the bright reflected purple of the walk, I could see his chalk bones waving with the movement of the water, while the brown sleeves and trouser legs of my clothing gave him a scarecrow-like appearance. A submerged scarecrow, I thought.

"But that won't keep away the water buzzards," I said to myself.

My words might have been an invitation. At that very moment I saw three of the long green water lizards that the Paint-Faces had mentioned. They were slithering through the waves in my direction. For once I wished for webbed hands and feet.

CHAPTER VII

THE sharp pointed noses of those water creatures fascinated me, and I would have liked to examine them under more favorable circumstances. Those noses were tools designed by nature for the intricate job of stripping every shred of flesh from a human skeleton—allowing for the water's magnifying effects, each of the three hungry beasts must have been at least twelve

feet long. They possessed sharp webbed hands, not much larger than human hands—and now it occurred to me that here was where the water dwellers got their webs for their own fingers.

I had overlooked a detail in my makeup as a painted guard. That would never do. If I were ever to pass in the society of other Paint-Faces I must surely repair my hands with webs so they would pass casual inspection.

It was something that I might have pondered over more leisurely, except for the fact that these three green, glittering water lizards were quite hungry and in the mood for action.

I surprised myself by swimming toward them. I blew a breath of air at them. A bubble—that was about as effective a weapon as I could think of in my present state of mind. Then I suddenly ducked behind the skeleton.

It would have been a mistake to leave such a good pocket knife in the pocket of a bony creature who would certainly never draw another blade on any enemy. In my hands the knife could be useful.

Would it still be there?

I jammed my hand in the right pocket.

The nearest water lizard was coming at me angrily now. He had played games with stuck men before. I disconcerted him a trifle when I thrust the bony white arm at him. He whipped the water with his tail. I came up for a breath and went down again. The whipping action of the creature's tail had caused the floundering guards in the distance to turn and look. I seized another quick breath, knowing I dared not take a chance on coming up again unless I wanted to be seen.

The knife. I got it open, and none too soon. The ugly water lizard kicked and swam at my face. I jabbed across

with the knife. He plowed into my wrist, and I felt the scrape of teeth. But the blade found the fellow's palate, and he went into reverse, then there was a ripping and tearing of water on the surface. The red waters were pale compared to the carmine streak that snaked out. The blood that flowed over my wrist wasn't mine, it was his.

But the knife was mine and I went for him like a Caribbean diver for a shark. A plunge at his midsection. It was a mistake. His tough hide resisted my stab. He was fading back, however, and making room for his two hungry chums. He was hurt.

The mouth had been his sensitive point. Two more mouths were coming as close as I could ask.

So I fought at their snouts. I must have whacked one of them off clean. I heard a mad croaking sound and an ocean lizard number two fought at the water and plunged away. Another stream of brilliant red dyed the colored waters.

I gave up on number three as soon as he showed an inclination to retreat. My desire for breath had almost killed me. I swam, and I wasn't being followed. My lungs held tight and my hand caught the safety of a rock before I dared raise my head to the precious air.

Again, a long moment of quiet breathing. Breathing—someone should write a tribute to the joy of breathing. But nothing could be written that would do justice to my relief of that moment.

Time was getting short. And no doubt the Paint-Faces would come back this way in a few minutes.

Still clinging to the knife, I swam under water again, exploring the perpendicular shore line until I found a place to ascend into the shadows. Many minutes later I knew that I was safe,

at least temporarily. Back in the deep darkness, halfway up to the ceiling where I could hear the soft echoes of the ebbing water as it was allowed to recede from the area behind the water gate, I watched and waited and rested. The water ebbed away. Soon it would recede lower to the level of the sea beyond the gate.

And there I stood, rising into full view.

Yes, to all intents and purposes, it was I who stood out there on the purple walk. Somewhere, I knew the eyes of my uncle and my cousin were peering at the gate, waiting for it to lower to make sure that I—my skeleton—would be there. They wouldn't be disappointed.

The gate lowered slowly. The Leopard Walk came into view again. And there stood the clean white skeleton, bearing the sagging water-soaked garments of the late George Freeman . . .

CHAPTER VIII

THE two Paint-Faces were pretty slow about their job of removing me—the skeleton, I mean—from its ghagstic base along the walk. I guessed the reason. They were undoubtedly doing considerable arguing, trying to figure out how it was that they had once lost sight of me before the water had risen. Once they had believed that the water lizards must have boldly moved up when the water was still only ankle deep and swept me from view; but after they had gone to search me with their harpoons, I had reappeared, stuck in the walk according to plan.

At any rate, they had now found me, safe and quite dead and fleshless, and they were bearing my bones off proudly to the circular door of the Twisted Arm tower.

I crept along the upper trail. The red sea water was dancing in my eyes. The prized knife was folded into the small pocket of my trunks. I had a curiously free feeling of being out of existence.

Now I spotted David and Uncle Willard, skulking along a lower trail, moving from shadow to shadow about fifty feet below me. Occasionally I could hear them discussing the problem of breaking the news to their two remaining crewmen. They were as troubled over phrasing their report as anyone might be if he were confronted with the job of announcing that he had murdered a rich relative.

Along the way I came to the place where Bud had hidden his "treasure." A few steps beyond, I turned and sauntered back to look down into the crevice. Something had occurred to me. An idea that might be well worth the trouble—if Bud were willing to give me this cooperation.

Carefully I crawled down between the walls, making use of the climbing glue which I had picked up along the way. Halfway down to Bud's hiding place I stopped. I could distinctly hear the light sobbing of a child.

"Bud!" I whispered softly. "Bud, is that you?"

The sobbing broke off. "It's me. *Who are you?*"

"George. George Freeman. Can I come down?"

The boy gave a surprised gurgle. "Is it really you, George? It can't be. George is dead. I saw him—*Who are you?*"

I had forgotten about my painted face. The boy thought I was a guard, and he was caught with his stolen skeleton.

"But I *am* George. Don't you know my voice? I gave them the slip, Bud. Don't mind this paint. I had to do

something for disguise."

"You *are*—oh-oooh." His breath sort of gave way, and he was suddenly bawling like a baby, and he couldn't seem to talk. It took a few minutes for the tension to melt. "I didn't know what I was going to tell Loonza," he said, when he regained control of himself.

"Does she know?"

"No. Not yet. But she'll hear as soon as the guards come back from delivering the skeleton. And she'll wonder which one it was. Whether it might have been David—or your uncle—"

"It wasn't any of us, Bud."

"Then who was it?"

"No one. It was supposed to be me. But I swam out, like you told me to, and I bumped into the Paint-Face station under the water level. Lucky for me, there was a skeleton in it. I borrowed it, dressed it up, and set it up for them to find."

"Gee!"

The admiration in Bud's eyes repaid me for all the risk I had taken. It was as if I were being paid high honors for having saved my own life. But Bud showed a flicker of worry right away and I knew he had caught sight of some unfinished business.

"They'll soon miss the skeleton from their station, and then they may know somebody pulled a trick."

"Then what?"

"They'll be made to know you outwitted them. The Paint-Faces always win. They can't stand to lose. They'll start searching the hills."

"I took that chance, Bud. Unless I miss my guess, they'll quarrel among themselves, and nobody will know whether the new skeleton is yours truly or someone else."

"The thing for us to do," Bud volunteered, "is to take my skeleton down to the station under the rock, so that they'll never know."

I COULD have hugged him for that. I knew it meant a sacrifice of his stolen treasure, but he knew, as well as I, that it might prevent a search for me among these rocky hills.

"Would we dare?"

"I can do it myself, as soon as the decks are clear. Gee, with all of your guard paint, you might get by easier than I. But that would be taking an awful chance. They'd be sure to wonder which guard you are. What's your name? . . . M-m-m. That's an awful smear."

Our discussion came to an abrupt end when Bud broke off with, "Get back! Out of the light. Quick!"

We ducked.

"What did you see, Bud? Was it Uncle Willard again?"

"Worse than that. It was somebody on the tower—you know, the porch up there on the Twisted Arm. It's higher than almost anything except the big ceiling, and it can look down into a lot of these crevices."

"Did you see someone?"

"The magician and two guards. They seemed to be looking this way."

"What do you think it means?"

"I'll bet they've been observing you all the time."

I felt the chills chase through my spine. During all my breathless maneuvers in and under the water, screened from the view of the town by the water gate, it hadn't occurred to me that I was, of course, perfectly visible from the top of the Twisted Arm, a hundred and twenty feet overhead. I couldn't recall having seen anyone up on that porch; I couldn't recall having looked.

"If they saw you, there'll be a search," said Bud.

"If they've discovered that the skeleton isn't fresh, there may be a search too. Listen, Bud, is there any way into

that place other than the Leopard Walk and the circular door?"

"Sure, there's a wall path up to the rear entrance. The Paint-Faces use it all the time."

"I'm a Paint Face."

Bud looked me over skeptically. "Gee, I don't know. I'd hate for you to get caught."

"I need to see your Mong. If I could once break in, I might be able to swing a deal."

"I don't think strangers ever get in," Bud said. "What do you want?"

"It's like this. The old man that originally founded this colony owes me a small fortune, and the books deserve to be straightened. Have you ever been in?"

"Gee, no. But I've seen the Mong several times."

"What does he look like?"

"He's the oldest man you ever saw, and he looks mean enough to scare an ocean lizard. I don't think he ever talks with anyone. He lets Propsander, the magician, do all the talking."

"What do you mean, magician? Do you have someone who works some kind of magic?"

"They say Propsander reads your thoughts. That's how he can protect the Mong from any enemies. If any enemies get through, they always give their thoughts away, and that cooks them."

The figures now disappeared from the tower top, and Bud and I ventured out into the brighter light. It was a wide and busy ocean den to look down upon. Several groups of boys were swimming over from the farther end of the great cavern to see what the excitement was all about. Throngs had gathered from the markets and were skimming along through the surface of the water, looking this way and that. The fact that two strangers had tried

the walk along the ghagstic gate was enough to fill the shore town with gossip. You could see the heads bobbing this way and that. Everyone was on the alert for more possible visitors.

THE town had been nervous for two days, Bud explained, ever since he himself had let the cat out of the bag that there were some invaders back in the hills.

"I was pretty mad at all the strangers but you, and I started spreading the alarm," Bud admitted. "But sis quieted me. Lots of folks didn't know whether to believe me. There are always rumors about people coming down from some world on top. It's mostly Mercurians, of course, and they all work up into skeletons for the Mong's galleries."

What an air-tight world! It resisted Mercurians! It resisted earthmen! And it had all started only three or four generations ago when a certain great-step-uncle of mine had gathered up his criminal record and fled along with a boat load of space travelers, to a safer climate.

Later, I thought, if time permitted, I would have to tell Bud and Loonza more about the curious criminal personality of my great-step-uncle, who was said to have accumulated a great amount of experience in assembling his own art galleries and museums of sculpture. There had once been black headlines when my great-grandfather disappeared from the scene, soon after his return from this planet with a twenty ton cargo of ghagstic. And blacker headlines, many months later, when he was found encased *within* a handsome ghagstic statue of himself, perfectly preserved and stone dead.

Probably no one had ever tried more daring experiments with ghagstic than my great-step-uncle Montgomery. His

specimens would have gone over well in this Mong's gallery, I thought. Or was that where this Mong had picked up his ideas? The only trouble was, each of my great-step-uncle's statues represented a murder, which he himself performed simply by placing a man under a shower of liquid ghagstic and allowing it to freeze him in.

"What did your great-step-uncle look like?" Bud asked.

"I've only seen his pictures in the papers. After he skipped the earth, the interplanetary police tried to trail him. They may have followed him here, but they never brought him back to the earth for justice."

"They may have swum in this water and taken a liking to it and stayed. That often happens, you know."

This fact, as Bud elaborated it, helped to explain how the spaceship load of passengers whom my great-step-uncle forced into this ocean den, became a permanent population.

"Maybe our Mong is your great-step-uncle," Bud suggested.

I smiled at this suggestion. I knew that my father had been tempted to explore in this direction, before his death, believing that he might find the remnants of my great-grandfather's stolen fortune. But he had desisted fearing that Montgomery might still be alive.

By now, however, we had deemed ourselves safe on this score; for the years would have piled up into ten more than a century of age for W. W. Montgomery, if he had lived until now.

"As I say, the Mong is a very old man," Bud repeated.

"Mong . . . Montgomery . . . Mong . . . Um-m . . . I wonder. I'll look in on him soon," I said. "But first I'd better listen in on David and his father to see how they feel about my death."

Bud beamed. "Sure, let's do." And he was already a dozen steps ahead of

me and going like a bullet.

CHAPTER IX

THERE were only two figures to be seen in the cave through our stone lattice. Uncle Willard and his son were talking it over. Their voices were low, sullen, reeking with guilt.

"We're going to have to wedge our way into the good favor of some official before we can crack the tower," Uncle Willard declared. He was more nervous than I had ever seen him before. My "death" had stirred him with a frenzied restlessness, and you could see that his conscience was going to hound him every minute for a long time to come.

"We'll not cross the Leopard Walk," David said. "There must be another way."

"I think we might get help from that Paint-Face named Zober. You remember him at the market. Very uncommunicative, a solid-looking fellow, in spite of his paint."

"I'd rather not rely on anyone. Why trust any of them? Trusting—that was George's policy, but it isn't mine."

"Zober." Uncle Willard fondled the name as if trying to keep his mind occupied. "Black and yellow painted face. Never said a word when they gave him the basket of supplies for the Mong, but you could tell from the way that merchant handed it to him that he respected him."

"Respect for the big-shot's errand boy, sure. That's not much to go on."

"I thought you favored Zober."

"I only said that he had better looking hands than the others. His fins were only fancy gloves removable. . . . S-s-sh. Here come Blanchard and Casey."

It was a cold silence that held reign in the cave then for several minutes.

Then men ate, and Bud and I exchanged nudges which meant that we would go down and have a whirl at those victuals, too, as soon as the coast was clear.

Casey spoke harshly. "We heard some very bad news down the line."

"Whom have you been talking with?" David asked accusingly.

"With no one. But we listened. They say two strangers have been converted into skeletons. Skeletons, did you hear? It happened within the past few hours."

"Indeed?" said David. "Interesting. Mercurians?"

"Earthmen."

"Too bad."

"Where are Jim Sutter and George Freeman?" Casey asked sharply.

"I haven't seen them," said Uncle Willard.

"Repeat your question, Casey," said Blanchard, and he reached for a gun. David must have expected this. He whipped out his automatic pistol, and there was a bad light in his eyes.

"Settle down and don't get nervous," David snapped.

Blanchard stood, tense, frozen.

"Careful, son," Uncle Willard said. "We need these men. Settle your nerves."

"Settle your own nerves, damn it," David retorted. Uncle Willard now stopped his pacing and stood glaring.

Blanchard relaxed and folded his arms. "All right, give us the worst. What do you want of us, now that you've got rid of Jim and George?"

"Stop your devilish talk. We've got rid of no one. If two of our men have blundered straight into an ocean trap, who could stop them? It's happened. They got their feet tangled somehow, and from all appearances some of the Mong sea pets cleaned them up before we knew anything about the danger. We're plenty cut up over losing them."

Aren't we, David? Sure. All right. That's that."

"Cut up, are you?" said Casey, not nearly as sarcastically as he might have said it. "Come on, serve us the best deal you've got left, and we'll let you know whether we'll take it."

BOTH Uncle Willard and David squirmed. Casey and Blanchard followed their advantage. They demanded to know what was to become of the coveted Freeman fortune, now that, as they believed, both Kenneth and George Freeman were out of the picture.

"We can listen to reason," Blanchard said. "Deal us a hand."

"Listen close," said Uncle Willard. "Only one cargo of ghagstic has ever been brought back to the earth and that was so many years ago that the metallurgists still get a dreamy look when they speak of it. It wasn't gold and it wasn't platinum, but it brought a solid one hundred dollars a pound, and there were twenty tons in the cargo. George Freeman's great-grandfather grossed four million dollars on that haul. Now. We have ample room for twenty tons in the ship we left up there on the surface."

"Or you might add another three hundred and sixty pounds, with Jim and George both gone," Casey said coldly.

Uncle Willard ignored the remarks. "We'll handle this with gloves or with an iron fist, whichever the Mong prefers. We can worm our way into his sanctum in the big stone tower over yonder and invite him to sign over free samples—which he ought to do if he's reasonable, seeing as how it's as much ours as anyone's."

"It is ours," David interpolated.

"Or, if he fails to come through, or talks of making trouble over it, I figure that with a little more equipment

we can soon drain twenty tons out of the sea, right from this ocean den's back door. You boys can swim well enough to go under that Black Ledge, I presume."

"What's this?" Casey asked. "I'm no swimming champion."

"There's a Black Ledge down beyond the Twisted Arm tower which they claim opens into the sea. If either of you can swim under that and bring the lines through, we can draw the material right out from under the Mong's foundation stones so to speak."

They waited for Casey and Blanchard to reply. The men looked at each other, and Casey gave a slight shrug.

"I suppose," said David, "that you're waiting for us to cut you in on a big slice before you'll agree to go through."

"You aren't even close," said Casey.

David rose, fingering his gun nervously. "What's your secret smirking about? Out with it. What's your price?"

Casey rose and met David's eyes and you could practically feel the sparks of hatred.

"We'd have done most anything for George Freeman," Casey answered slowly. "The one thing we've been waiting to hear someone say is, there ought to be some kind of services for Sutter and Freeman. Or are we too damn busy countin' the dollars' worth of ghagstic to think of that?"

Uncle Willard gave a quick gesture to David and the two of them marched out of the cave. The two crewmen were left, and as long as Bud and I waited, they simply sat there in the silence of their own thoughts.

CHAPTER X

LOONZA went with me when I delivered the two baskets of sea del-

icacies to the service entrance of the Twisted Arm tower. There were three Paint-Faces working around; two in the kitchen, and one as houseman, moving his cleaning tools out onto a back porch. The rear of the high stone palace had been connected by a stone and ghagstic structure to another tower of stone beyond, which served as a combination backyard and outdoor parlor, not visible from the red waters below. Here was luxury unlike anything I had seen for a long time. Loonza was fairly gasping. This was simply out of her world.

A Paint-Face waved us away and we took the hint and started off, looking back like two children who had meant to sneak under the tent and see the circus.

We were both taking long chances even looking in from the back door. As we came away, Loonza said that the big silent Paint-Face named Zober had winked at her. She guessed he was warning her.

"A wink can mean lots of things," I said. We watched our chances as we started down the path. No one seemed to be watching so we ducked into a shelf in the rock where a hole for a small window had been cut through. Temporarily we were safe and secluded in the rear wall of the Twisted Arm tower. Anyone coming or going along the path would have to look sharp to find us. If we had slipped off the edge of the shelf, the ocean lizards would have found us a hundred and twenty feet below. The window had been barred against chance intruders like ourselves. The bars were six femur bones from the legs of human skeletons. A mute warning to trespassers, I thought.

"Bones," said Loonza, giving a little start.

"Bones," I said, and remembering the wink of Zober, the Paint-Face, I

winked at her.

"What does a wink mean where you came from?"

I regarded her with interest. "I'll bet you used to ask my brother the same question."

"I did," she admitted.

"What kind of answer did he give?"

"He winked at me."

"That was my brother, all right," I said. I wanted to ask her a thousand questions about him—how he and his party had established their camp, and what effort they had made to reach the authorities here, and how much he had confided to her about the ghagstic wealth that our great-grandfather Freeman had found here.

But Loonza always became wistful and a little sad when I brought up the subject. She had a broken heart, and yours truly, George Freeman, hadn't succeeded in easing the pain for her.

"You say a wink means lots of things?" she asked. "When you pointed to these bones in the window you winked. Why?"

"Why?" I shrugged. "Just because—well, you can see for yourself the chance we're taking. I mean, we both understand: Just now we're safe, but we know it can't last. If we'd get caught, who knows—*our* bones might fill some new window. So I winked—because *we both understand*. Now—do you *see*?"

She gulped. "One wink means *all that*?"

"Sure. Why not?"

"It's an awful lot of meaning for one little wink."

"That's why you wink," I said. "It's more meaning than you have time to put into words, so—"

"Your brother once told me that on earth everybody winks, more or less."

"Certainly—that is, if the occasion arises."

"It must be dreadful," she said, and nestled closer to me as if visualizing a world of dangers.

"Dreadful—why?"

"Everybody going around snapping an eyelid at everybody else to tell them that if they don't look out their bones will be used for bars across a window."

"Now, Loonza!"

"Well, you said—"

"There's only one answer to that, and here it is." I winked at her and her eyes widened and she shrugged, as if completely bewildered.

"What did *that* wink mean?"

"It meant that you and I know that you're teasing me, trying to pretend that all winks apply to these gruesome things." I tapped one of the chalky femurs. "Do you understand? A wink doesn't apply just to these."

"Sure, I understand. It could apply to your ribs, too, couldn't it?" And she clinched the point by giving me a wink. A painfully artificial wink.

Exasperating, to say the least. "Listen, woman, I'm trying to tell you that a wink means *we understand!* See, *we understand!*"

"Any kind of bones, then?" Loonza asked, smiling hopefully. "Not just these?" She tapped one of the window bars and it fell in.

For two minutes we hardly breathed. The bone had clattered to a floor. Evidently no one had heard. The occupants of the tower were two or three floors above us. The room had an awfully empty sound. We removed another bone with care. I crawled into the window and helped Loonza, and a moment later we were slipping through the dark hallways of the Mong's private home.

CHAPTER XI

A BOWL of water hornets could be seen through a mirror beyond the

landing at the head of the stairs. Loonza caught my hand and we held back, watching.

She whispered, "Don't frighten them."

We could hear the shuffling footsteps of someone in the room beyond. We were on dangerous ground, and a little thing like the sudden darting of water hornets in a bowl might easily give us away.

But we moved on cautiously until we reached the draperies that hung from an arch beyond the top of the stairs. With every step I watched to see whether those fifteen or twenty black spike-shaped hornets were going to jump with fright.

"That's funny," I whispered. "The darned things ignore us. They keep pointing in one direction."

"They're turning," Loonza said. "Look."

The footsteps of the old man could be heard passing through the next room. They were watching him. They turned like so many compass needles.

"There's another bowl of them in the other room," Loonza observed under her breath. "The Mong must like them for pets."

I watched the more distant bowl, and by George, *they* were also turning like compass needles.

"It's an easy way to tell where the Mong is," I whispered. "Look!"

Then he came into view—the great Mong himself. The aged shuffling walk didn't begin to express the age of the subject passing before our eyes.

Aged? He made you think of a gnarled, warped, barkless old tree on the timberline of a windswept mountain. That's how he looked: an image carved out of weatherbeaten wood, all cracked and shredded and ready to shatter and decay. But his walk was proof that he was alive, and his eyes

were still burning with a curious intensity—too bright, I thought. Bright with evil. An insane brightness that spoke of torture and sadistic delights and murder.

Loonza must have seen him as I did. She caught her breath, and her hand clutched my fingers tightly.

"Ha!" the little bent old man said. It was an evil cackle, and sort of dry, rattling voice that nutshells might make if they could speak. His single word directed toward the black water hornets who appeared to respond to his taunt. They struck at him and bumped their noses against the bowl. His bent shoulders hunched deeper and he gave another taunting "Ha!"

His garment was hardly what one would expect of a king or an emperor on dress parade; he was dressed only for comfort. Loonza believed he hadn't displayed himself among the people of the Crimson Sea for several years. It was enough that he should be seen, from time to time, on the balcony of the Twisted Arm. His garments were a grey and blue robe and soft slippers of finely spun sea-plank fibers. His sleeves hung loosely, revealing the thin brown wrinkled arms. His hands were more like claws than human hands, and his crooked fingernails reminded one of a buzzard's talons.

Now he was rattling away in a disjointed conversation that was obviously for the benefit of the water hornets.

"Ha! Snap at me, you leetle black devils. Can't you snap any harder? Ha! You never tire of leaping at evil things, do you? Break your heads against the glass. I'm your magnet, you leetle darts of poison. Not in the whole ocean will you find anyone else worth snapping at."

Loonza nudged me. She had evidently heard the legend of the hornets' attraction before; now she was seeing

it illustrated all too plainly.

SO THEY would spend their evil selves against objects of evil! I recalled the time that they had attacked David Pemberton like a volley of bullets. But at the time I hadn't guessed—

"You think I am evil, you leetle black monsters? Give me another ten years. Another twenty. Ha! Give me fifty years, and I'll fill myself with such evil that you'll smash your brainless heads every time I pass you. You think I'm already evil enough? Ha! Give me another twenty years . . ."

His monologue trailed off into incomprehensible muttering. Other footsteps were sounding from the balcony stairs. Someone was descending. The traffic was getting too thick for comfort. This might be one of the Paint-Faces or it might be the notorious magician—

"Propsander!" Loonza whispered. We drew the folds of the draperies a little closer, allowing a crack of light to come through, admitting the image of the man descending the stairs.

"They're moving another skeleton out there on the shore," Propsander growled. His words were punctuated by the heavy beat of his feet on the steps and his fists on the railing. "It's the boy again. I don't know what's devilin' him. Hornin' in on your racket, Monty."

"My ornaments! Has he stolen another?" the little old man cackled sharply.

"If he was, I could figure him out. But hell, he's bringin' back the one he stole before. I can't figure it."

"Returning it where?"

"I'll watch and see. As soon as he gets around the Paint-Faces, I'll report. They're sound asleep as usual." The magician Propsander hardly fulfilled my expectations. I had pictured a tall, graceful polished looking person with

the clever gestures of a Frenchman and a voice that would be at least pleasant and attractive. This man failed my guess all around. He was thick-necked, flat-nosed, and heavy knuckled and he had all the look of an inmate with a bad criminal record. His jaw sagged with surliness, and his general bearing, burdened by Humpty-Dumpty lines, was anything but proud and attractive.

There was hard-driving quality about him, however; and that was what had doubtless won the place for him as an executive for the Mong. His arrogant eyes under half-closed lids show a glint of knowing what the score was. And his gravel-edged speech, too, was clipped with directness and purpose.

Here was one earth man, obviously imported within recent times, who had not only found his way past the Paint-Face barriers to this tower, but had also made a sure, comfortable place for himself with the Mong.

"Magician!" I whispered sarcastically as soon as he had passed through the room. Loonza looked at me questioningly and I started to give her a wink. I caught myself—a record of sorts; for it was probably the first time in my life that I had ever called off a wink just in time.

"Did you hear what he said about the skeleton?" Loonza asked.

"That's your brother he's talking about. Bud's taking an awful risk, trying to replace the skeleton I borrowed." Now that both Propsander and the Mong had moved out of hearing I gave Loonza the facts on my skeleton deal. It was a plucky thing for Bud to do, carrying a replacement for the specimen I had grabbed—in order to prevent the guards from getting on my trail. But if Bud was being watched, the danger would soon catch up with him. "I wish I could warn him. If I could only trust myself to walk into

the open as a Paint-Face, I'd try."

"No, George. You leave Bud's troubles to him. This is his world—probably the only world he'll ever know—unless he gets a broken heart sometime and decides he'll have to leave to get over it."

"Ugh?" I slipped an arm around Loonza. "Do you think that's a good way for a person to get over a broken heart?"

"But Bud doesn't have a broken heart. He may never have one."

"You didn't answer my question."

"Going to a new world might help a person to forget."

"It's worth thinking about, Loonza," I said, feeling very close to her.

WE PLAYED a game of hide-and-seek with the Mong very soon after that. He was plodding around restlessly from one room to another, and we followed him. Loonza believed he had been upset by Propsander's talk of skeleton thefts.

"He has enough human skeletons to keep him happy the rest of his life," she said.

"Natural life?" I wondered. He looked to me as if he had already lived forty years beyond his time.

As for the skeletons, Loonza and I saw a whole drawing room lined with them as we crossed to a new hiding place. The walls and pillars and even the ceilings had been decorated with selected bones, strung together in all manner of fantastic shapes.

The old man's footsteps shuffled slowly up the stairs. Loonza and I awaited our chances and presently followed him.

Now we had returned to the level of the rear entrance where we had originally come with a basket of goods. The Paint-Face with the name "Zober" on his back was moving about quietly on

the rear porch. The other guards had accompanied Propsander down the spiral tower steps on his errand to the water level.

Propsander had left in a bad mood, stating that he would go down and stir those lazy Paint-Faces out of their deep sleep. He had referred to the guards at the end of the purple walk who had failed to see Bud slip around them with a skeleton in tow.

The coast was almost clear. This was what we had waited for. As long as the husky Zober remained occupied out on the back porch, Loonza and I apparently had the aged Mong all to ourselves.

"Ha!" His cackle of satisfaction told us that he was off on some mysterious purpose of his own. "At last."

We hid behind a stack of Mercurian skulls heaped as high as the ceiling; we dodged around two piles of miscellaneous bones; then, sliding through the grey and blue draperies, we caught our first view of what must have been the Mong's private laboratory.

"At last!" the Mong repeated.

He stood against a circular glass wall. It enclosed a section of marble floor that was hollowed out in the shape of a funnel. It was like a polished stone morning glory, about twenty feet in diameter, at the bottom of a glass cylinder.

The old man touched one of the levers which projected from the glass wall. A trap door opened upward, a splash of water came through, and with it came a long sharp green nose, emerging as the narrow savage head of an ocean lizard.

The lizard was doubtless surprised by this sudden exit from its prison. It blinked at the creamy light of the room and came paddling out on his four glittering webbed feet. It was a handsome, dangerous-looking fifteen-foot monster. Ignoring us, it pranced around the up-

per edges of the funnel, sniffing and shrugging, apparently wondering where it would find a pool. The splash of water had drained away. But now the old man touched another lever and a wonderful gush of glassy syrup spilled down from an opening at the top of the glass cylinder. The Mong's little brown hand, still lifted, shook with excitement.

"Ghagstic!" Loonza whispered in awe.

It was a veritable showerbath of ghagstic! It sprayed against the circular glass wall like a dash of blinding rain. Loonza and I forgot ourselves and crept closer. For a moment I couldn't see what had happened to the big twelve foot ocean lizard. Then I caught sight of him.

For one quick moment the beast leaped around, looking for someone to fight. He was in pain. He whipped his tail against the circular enclosure. Suddenly he straightened, lifted his vicious looking head and tried to open his eyes wide.

That was his last effort. The ghagstic had him. It showered over him and coated him with an inch-thick transparent covering.

Almost instantly it must have solidified over him, for all of his motions ceased, and there he stood, a polished statue of himself, as lifelike as anything could be in death.

The excess ghagstic hissed down into the funnel and with a swallowing sound was gone.

"At last!" the Mong repeated. He looked away from the object of his experiment. "You see, I've always wanted to add an ocean lizard to my collection."

Loonza whispered almost inaudibly. "He's talking to us. . . . See. . . . He's watching us through the mirror. . . . We're caught."

CHAPTER XII

HE TURNED, not as if he had discovered intruders, but as if I were one of his Paint-Faces, standing by for any emergency.

Loonza, clutching my arm, whispered, "He thinks you belong here."

It was a strange physical sensation, being stared at by such a weird aged man. His shining watery eyes looked from me to Loonza. "Well! What do you think of him?"

We came closer to the circular wall, as if drawn by his eyes. If our only purpose had been to admire the museum pieces of this eccentric collector, we might have paid a high compliment to the picturesque statue he had just created. My boundless curiosity resulted in an oblique comment.

"Do you think he's a match for your other specimens?" I tried to appear casual.

My question was almost lost, for now the Mong was looking at Loonza, studying her intently. Then—

"Huh? What are you saying? A match for my best? Ha! I have some beauties." Again it was the sight of Loonza that held his attention. "Beauties—yes! But there are always new ones to be had, each more beautiful than the last. . . . Er—" He turned to me with an order. "Take him to the mounting room at once."

I swallowed hard. I moved toward the door in the glass wall, unlatched it, opened it—

"What are you doing?" he cracked.

"I was going to take him—"

"You fool. Do you expect to drag him with your hands? You know I wouldn't have you touch him with your bare hands." He was looking at my hands critically. He edged toward me, scrutinizing my painted face. "I don't know you."

"I just came," I said.

"Let Zober take care of this. I don't want any amateurs working with my models. Latch the door and come away. *Who are you?*"

"My name is George."

"Did Propsander hire you?"

"I—I just came—"

"You said that. Who is this girl? Are you here to ask me a favor? I suppose you want me to add another member to my human collection."

"Ye gods, no!" I blurted.

"It's a very exclusive collection. Her family would be honored. I would let them come to look at her once every year. No? Speak up. What's your business?"

I drew a hard breath and spoke with all the cool courage I could muster. A leap in the dark, perhaps. But this was my chance.

"*Mr. Montgomery, I want to talk business with you.*"

"*Mr. Montgomery!* Well! Who told you that was my name?"

The Mong's bony brown arms jerked as if he had been shocked, and his thin white hair gave a furious toss.

"I learned all about you from one of the Freemans," I said. "Did you know that two Freeman brothers have come down to this ocean den to visit you?"

"Two Freeman brothers!" His head lowered and waggled with a ducking motion like a snake trying to decide where to strike. I continued as calmly and impersonally as I could. "They were the direct descendants of your stepbrother, upon whom you practiced your arts of robbery and ghagstic murder. One of them is still alive, and he's going to face you."

"How interesting! Someone has filled you with delightful stories. Come, I want to see how the water hornets will like me when they hear your pretty words."

LOONZA was trembling. I ushered her across the room after the little old man. He led us to a corner of the balcony, so that we were looking down on the Crimson Sea. The thick stone columns at either side of us I recognized as two stubby fingers of this Twisted Arm tower.

The Mong seated himself across from us.

"Now tell me, what does this Freeman brother propose to accomplish by coming to my ocean den?"

"He intends to recover the lost Freeman fortune: four million dollars and a claim to the ghagstic resources of this region."

"What means would he employ to accomplish his purpose?"

"Any fair means," I said, groping. "If there are no laws here, he would appeal to your sense of justice."

The cackling laugh was like nutshells crunching under a boot.

"What's so funny?" I demanded. My face grew hot. "I suppose you've committed so many murders you've forgotten there is such a thing as justice. Is that it?"

The cackling old man quieted, rubbed his watery eyes, and drew his chair closer. Loonza crowded back against the stone railing as if repelled.

He spoke slowly, looking out toward the glowing light of the vast stone ceiling.

"The Freeman brothers might well consider the rare value of my experiment here." He waved his hand loosely toward the shoretown below. "Look what I have built."

"You built it out of the Freeman fortune."

"Yes." He nodded at me so innocently that I thought, even the water hornets would have been impressed by his show of virtue. "Yes, I stole the money from my stepbrother, and after

I had appropriately coated him with ghagstic so that his descendants would always be able to see him and pay him honors, I used his money to build this colony far away from the hard civilization of the earth. Young man, I assume that you yourself are one of the Freeman brothers. . . . Otherwise you would not be interested. I don't know how you've managed to seep through the barriers and find me, or what means you have used to gain the friendship of this lovely girl—but you're here, and I'll answer your questions—if you'll answer mine. Tell me, have you found my ocean den something to despise? Do the people here seem to be unhappy?"

It was a double-edged question. I couldn't answer it in a word. I replied that one couldn't help despising the inhuman methods that were used on strangers.

"Ah, but that's only a necessary evil to protect the original population. We cannot be overrun by strangers. They would soon demoralize us. And as you can see, the select population is highly contented, industrious, and peace loving. Isn't it so?"

HE TURNED the question to Loonza. She answered yes with the naivete of a child. Yes, everything here was indeed quite beautiful.

"There," said the Mong. "Now, young man, suppose your great-grandfather had retained control of his fortune. What would have happened?"

"I don't know," I admitted.

"I'll tell you. The industrialists of the earth would have been in a frenzy to seize control of the ghagstic supply. Your noble ancestor would have gone to the courts to retain his monopoly. The lawyers would have lined up for a battle. The manufacturers would have cut each others' throats trying to

corner the market on new products. These tons of nature's materials would have been twisted into all manner of gadgets, most of which the human race has never needed and will never really need. Salesmen would have been whipped into a froth to go out and sell the useless stuff to people who didn't want it in the first place, and the radio-orators would have barked until they were blue in the face to make gullible consumers think they couldn't be happy without ghagstic. Laws would have been fought over to regulate the trade and establish tariffs on incoming materials—and a few million dollars would have been spent lobbying at Washington to promote the laws, or fight the laws, or make sure the laws were cut in some fanciful pattern to please other commercial interests that might contribute to the next campaign fund. Tell me, son, who would have been happier if I had left the fortune in the hands of your great-grandfather?"

I looked at Loonza. Her eyes were wide and she was shaking her head slowly. "What is he talking about?"

"About the earth."

"Are all of those dreadful things on the earth?"

"They only sound dreadful," I said. "It's all a matter of what you're used to."

"I thought the earth was a beautiful place where people admired the moon."

"Not many people have time for that," I said.

Loonza looked down over the ledge, down the perpendicular wall of rock to the red waters below. She said, "It's pretty down there. I wonder if the water is ever quiet enough that you can see your reflection from here."

The old man gave a low sinister laugh. He knew—just as I knew—that Loonza, in her innocence, had clinched the whole point of his argument. Here

life was simple, beautiful, undisturbed by the hundreds of thousands of artificial troubles that the people of my earth had conjured up for their own distress and suffering.

"This ocean den is a rendezvous," said my great-stepuncle. "It's an experiment which proves that people of the earth *can* live peaceably and happily, if they can only escape their heritage of man-made troubles. I have built this world out of the silver lining of my black robe of crime. In life these people are happy. In death—ah, they are nevertheless beautiful as ornaments for my palace."

He folded his arms and his evil smile rested upon me triumphantly. The only thing I could answer—and it was a woefully weak answer—was: "You've built it out of the Freeman fortune."

"Yes."

"Well?"

"I have a plan," the old man said slowly. "It has been in my mind for a long time. For many years, in fact, I have known that sooner or later some ambitious young Freeman would find his way into my world and demand that I make restitution for my so-called evil deeds. Now that you have come, I shall explain my plan. But first, I should have witnesses. Zober!"

CHAPTER XIII

THE aged Montgomery touched a cord. A tinkling musical note echoed through the stone columns and a moment later the Paint-Face Zober came out to the balcony. He bowed slightly and took the place that the Mong indicated.

If Loonza had looked sharp, she would have observed that this particular Paint-Face was interested in her. But in this ocean den, the guards with painted faces were socially unapproach-

able, it seemed. Once they had donned the paint, they became anonymous, losing their identity except as servants of the government. This man Zober, however, possessed a magnetic quality. In his presence I felt that the air was charged with too much electricity. I couldn't help wondering what he would look like if he removed his disguise.

I observed his hands, his feet, his crisp mud-plastered hair. As David had once mentioned, he did not possess the grafted web-structure between his fingers, but wore trim webbed gloves that were doubtless removable.

I whispered to Loonza, "An interesting fellow, this Zober."

She shook her head. "He watches me too close. I can't figure him out."

"Haven't you known him all your life?"

"Only in recent months. They say that he swam in from the sea. But one never knows about the Paint-Faces." In a lower whisper she added, "One forgets their families, and their age, and everything except how severe they are."

The old man cleared his throat and our off-side conversation ceased. He looked to Zober. "Where is Propsander?"

Zober, amazingly silent, gestured toward the sea. Then the old man remembered that the magician had gone on an errand. There were only the four of us in this tower-top palace.

"We won't wait for Propsander," the old man said. "There are three of you to listen. How long will you live? No one knows. But one you will surely live long enough to pass my words on when the time comes. Listen closely."

His sleeves flapped in rhythm with his low spoken words.

"Many years ago I borrowed—stole, if you prefer—four million dollars from my step brother. I took possession of this region which he claimed. When

I die—"

He turned to me and gave his white hair an arrogant toss.

"Don't look so anxious, young man. I'm only a hundred and ten years old. I'll live another twenty years. Maybe forty, if I'm still enjoying myself. As long as there are new specimens for my art collections—er—but as I started to say—when I die, any living descendants of the Freeman family will be entitled to equal shares of a four million dollar consignment of ghagstic. Does that make you happy, young man?"

He turned on me so sharply that Zober couldn't fail to know I was not a Paint-Face. Painted though I was, I was an imposter. He must have guessed that I was a Freeman—and I knew that my trick would soon bring trouble down on my head. The Paint-Faces down at the gate would soon hear that a visitor had beat their death trap! Yes, Zober was staring through me. He gulped hard.

I wondered what his voice would sound like.

"In addition," said the old man, "if there is any Freeman who is willing to remain in this realm, the ocean den with all of its valuable resources will fall to him. He will own it, and govern the people, and use the riches as he sees fit. There. Do all of you understand?"

THE little old man gave a catlike lurch, and his glittering eyes fastened themselves upon someone who was approaching through the farther room. In spite of his age, W. W. Montgomery possessed the alert senses of a hunted animal.

"Excuse me," he said, recovering his dignity. "Visitors."

He plodded off through the rooms toward the rear entrance. Loonza and I followed cautiously for a few steps;

then the mirror gave us the picture. The withered little old Mong was receiving guests, after a fashion. They were forcing their way in with pistols.

Uncle Willard and David!

We heard the old man's crackling words of surprise. We heard David's hardboiled grumble. Uncle Willard was trying to temper the meeting with a show of manners: the guns were only for their own protection, he was saying, and please don't misunderstand! But it was David's ruthless manner that predominated. David growled:

"We are the rightful heirs to the Freeman fortune. If you are the high mogul of this joint, we can get right down to business."

Loonza whispered, "Whooo! He's mad. He's madder than when I took him to the fountain to help him get rid of the water hornets."

I replied that David had never been noted for his sweet disposition, and she needn't expect any appreciation for her act of kindness at this late date.

"Will he know you?" Loonza whispered. "If he sees you with me, he'll know you, in spite of your paint."

I shook my head. David was sure he had got rid of me, otherwise he and his father would never have barged in on the powers-that-be with such a cocksure announcement.

"My great-stepuncle was polite. What a pleasant surprise to have visitors from the outside world. They must come right in and tell him all about themselves.

"Yes, I am the Mong of this Crimson Sea," he crackled slowly, with wonderful dignity and modesty. His sleeves of blue and gray waved gracefully as he motioned them in. "Walk softly, please. My water hornets may be sleeping. . . . No, no, I'm mistaken. They are wide awake. Ah, they're taking quite an interest in you."

The bowl of pets was worth watching. Those lively black spikes were all lunging at once in the direction of the three men, and Loonza whispered, "There's enough evil to choke them!"

WE MOVED back into the balcony, for the Mong and his guests were coming in our direction.

"Our time is limited," David was saying sharply. "We're short on patience too."

"You'll have to pardon my son for coming right to the point," Uncle Willard said, "but he needs to get back to the earth as soon as possible. So if you'll just fork over, we'll take possession at once."

"Ver-r-ry interesting!" The old man drew out his words, not being in the least rushed or overwhelmed. He didn't know how rash a person David was. Did he realize that that black ugly pistol was in dangerous hands? He nodded slowly, trudging along through the arch and out onto the balcony. "So you two are the only living heirs to the Freeman fortune?"

"Right," said David. He gave us a quick glance. The sight of me made no impression. His gaze rested for a moment on Loonza, however, as if wondering whether she would make trouble for him. He turned his back, then, as they came to the stone railing.

"Just be seated," said the Mong. "I'll call Propsander. He handles all of my business."

"What the hell does he have to do with it?" David snarled.

Uncle Willard joined in. "You're the boss here. Let's get down to business."

The little old man gave an easy gesture. "Calm yourselves, gentlemen. If you are the rightful heirs, you'll have no objection to a routine check-up. My magician, Propsander, has the means

of verifying the truth of any man's statement."

David groaned. "Ugh. Lie detectors, huh? Well, you'll not catch us up with any of that stuff."

"You mean you won't submit to a test?"

Uncle Willard moderated the tension, though he was plenty tense himself; you could tell by the way his shoulders tightened whenever anyone spoke. "Of course we'll submit to any reasonable test. Anything you say within reason."

While the Mong spoke through a tube, evidently calling down to the guards or Propsander somewhere a hundred and twenty feet below, we could hear David grouching about the danger of death traps. Then he fell silent, noticing that Loonza and I were still back of him listening.

"He's afraid," I whispered to her. "that you'll ask him about a certain missing party named George Freeman."

A few minutes later the footsteps in the rear room announced the arrival of Propsander. He entered briskly, perspiring and impatient, wanting to know why he had been called.

"Don't think I haven't got to the bottom of the trouble, Boss," he said huskily. "I brought the trouble back with me so you can see it for yourself." His glance passed over the rest of us lightly. He was too intent on a purpose of his own to be disturbed about us. He called back, "Come in, Paint-Faces! Bring that young headache back to the balcony."

Two Paint-Faces marched in, bringing with them a small, timid prisoner—Bud!

CHAPTER XIV

LOONZA'S hands went to her lips. Bud saw her in a flash. He gulped and his eyes jumped, and I thought he'd

blurt something on the instant that would damn us all. Of course he recognized me! In another minute he'd give away my identity, I thought. I cast about for any convenient exit.

The only exit within easy reach was the rail, and I didn't care to try a one hundred and twenty foot high dive on an empty stomach—or any kind of stomach—which is probably the way I would land. I settled back in the corner. Loonza gave my hand a warning touch, and we waited silently to see what was going to happen.

The husky magician was now taking in the scene with an air of sizing up more trouble than he had bargained for.

"It looks like you have company, your honor," he said to the Mong with a strained air of respect. "Invaders, huh?"

Then Bud broke the ice, right smack in the middle. His webbed hand shot out at Uncle Walter and he cried, "There's the man that beat me."

"Huh?" Propsander gave a quick turn of his bullet-shaped head. "Slugged you, did he?"

"He sure did. Both of 'em did. They questioned me and then they began fighting me."

"It's a lie!" David snapped. "A damned lie!"

"It's the truth, and I've got bruises to show for it. And you'd have killed me, too, if it hadn't been for George. But George, he—"

The boy broke off with a snap of his teeth. His eyes gave the slightest flick in my direction and then he turned into a brave little statue and wouldn't say another word. He was on his toes, that kid, protecting me that way.

Then both David and Uncle Willard were talking fast, making all sorts of excuses but not making much sense, as far as their audience was concerned. The two guards stood back looking as

puzzled as possible through the stripes of paint that hid their real faces. The Mong and the magician turned from one to the other and presently silenced all talk. David grumbled to a stop, still twisting the gun in his nervous fingers.

The old man wanted to hear more of the small boy's version, so the magician opened up with questions.

"Tell us, lad, do you really know these men?"

"Sure. I've watched them since the day they came. They caught me to ask me questions. Then later, after the beating, I went back and listened to them outside their cave."

"Tell us what you know about them."

"They came with George Freeman on his business trip. Then they saw their chance to have George killed. They sent him over the walk."

"Lies!" David shouted, on his toes, flourishing his pistol.

"Shut up!"

"Lies, I tell you!"

PROPSANDER took two steps toward David with his arm thrust forward. "If they're lies, shut up and listen. I can tell you in a minute what's lies and what isn't. Now, go on, boy."

"They sent him over the purple walk so they'd be the only descendants left. After he was out of the way, they went on with their plans to come up here and claim everything. If you don't come through, they're going after a load of ghagstic under the Black Ledge."

"Interesting," said Propsander, turning to David and Uncle Willard. "But it won't take long to prove it's all a lie. Little boys always have good imaginations. Come with me, all of you."

It wasn't that easy. If it hadn't been for Uncle Willard, David would have shot down the magician and Bud then and there. He was so angry he was purple. But Uncle Willard calmed him,

and they marched ahead, and the rest of us followed.

Now we were walking into a part of the tower palace that I hadn't seen before, but wouldn't have missed for the world. It was the most luxurious—white tile walls and a private swimming pool.

"Into the water, gentlemen!" Propsander ordered.

"The hell we will," David growled. "Save your death traps for the numbskulls."

"There's a serious charge against you, young hothead," said Propsander. "This is your chance to clear yourself, unless you're afraid of the truth."

Of course David was afraid of the truth. He was on the spot. It was his father's rashness that carried the moment for Propsander. Uncle Willard was still ready to play their bluff to the limit. He stripped to his trunks and dived into the pool.

When the husky magician himself entered the water too, David's suspicions eased and he followed, mumbling, "Lie detectors, huh!"

Propsander emptied a bottle of green fluid into the water and tossed the bottle to the wall.

"In a moment," he said, walking to a depth that brought the water up to his chin, "I shall receive through the waves a transfer of your inner thoughts."

"None of that!" David snarled, and would have climbed out again. But a gesture from the Mong caused Zober to plunge into the pool and put the strong arm on David. David glanced at his weapon which he had temporarily parked on the ledge within easy reach. He calmed, like a child being persuaded to submit to an operation, and the magician proceeded.

Now all four persons stood with their heads barely above the water, and the lively green liquid spread a thin film all

around them. The tiny waves danced strangely.

"The thoughts are coming," Propsander said slowly. "It looks as if the boy was lying. If so, we'll throw him over the rail. There are plenty of hungry lizards . . . wait a moment! What's this?"

CHAPTER XV

UNCLE WILLARD and David were almost as pale as the white tile.

Loonza observed that the husky Zober was doing some thinking too. She whispered, "*His* thoughts might mess up everything! Why not? Whooo! Suppose he thinks Bud is guilty, and thinks it too hard. What would happen, George? Wouldn't the magician get *his* thoughts instead of theirs?"

"I wonder!"

"What'll we do, George, if they decide to throw Bud over?"

"Im going to get that gun!"

Our whispered conversation brought a "S-s-sh!" from Propsander, and I paused, irresolute. If I could have slipped along stealthily for another ten steps—

"Get up on the ledge, all of you!" Propsander barked.

The green liquid film gave way to a splashing of clear water. David and Uncle Willard were obedient enough, but David's nervous fingers waited on a little black death instrument in case of emergency.

Propsander calmly brushed the water off his muscular arms, marched along the ledge, and stopped before the Mong with a slight bow.

"Your honor, it appears that there are four persons who claim the rights to the Freeman fortune."

"*Four!*" Uncle Willard bellowed.

The aged little Mong stepped back in surprise, and his bony arms quivered.

"Explain!"

"One moment." Propsander pressed his forehead. "The thoughts are scrambled. Here! Here they come. I was mistaken."

"I should say you were," David muttered.

"Not four. Six!" Propsander declared. "Yes—six! Wait! Two of them are dead."

"Ye gods!" I blurted. "He's crazy."

It wasn't exactly a propitious time for me to get myself tangled up in what had been David's and Uncle Willard's show up to this moment. I can't say whether they recognized my voice, but everyone turned as if to say, what's this Paint-Face talking about?

"There are six, as follows," Propsander persisted. "These two men—that's two. They're not Freemans, but they're related. Then there are the two Freeman brothers, George and Ken—and my thoughts tell me that they are dead—both of them. That's four. Then in addition—"

"That's all," David said.

"No, there were two more, in the thoughts that entered my mind."

"Who the devil else?"

"This is strange," said Propsander, pressing his forehead and looking at the ceiling. "It comes to me that there are two Paint-Faces—both living—and each one believes he has a claim."

"*Paint-Faces!*" Unce Willard roared. "This is an outrage! It's a frame-up!"

Then I marched into the circle, and Loonza's tug at my arm failed to hold me back.

"Try *my* thoughts! I can unscramble the whole thing for you in a minute."

I plunged into the pool. Propsander came in after me. The waters calmed, and the little waves began to dance over the surface.

"H-m-m! Very interesting." Propsander nodded slowly. "Are you sure?"

All he could be sure of was that he was catching our sincerest thoughts. And he must have known that there was just a fraction of a percent of a chance that I *might* be mistaken. He knew—he must have known by now—that David and his father *were* mistaken in their very sincere belief that I had been killed.

"So that's how it is!" Propsander said. We climbed up to the ledge and he bowed before my aged, great-step-uncle. "Boss—your honor—I beg to report that the two Freeman brothers are living."

"Stop it!" David cried. "You're driving me mad. You don't know a damned thing. We saw with our own eyes—"

Both David and Uncle Willard were shouting in a rage. They knew that I, George Freeman, couldn't be alive. They had seen to it that I had walked into the death trap. They had seen the skeleton there afterward, and with George Freeman's garments clinging to it!

IF EVER two men convicted themselves in a moment of explosive talk, these were the boys that did it. Then they caught themselves, and they realized that even the Paint-Faces standing back against the wall were laughing at them. They lapsed into a hard silence.

"I'd advise you to forget that gun and listen to me," Propsander said in a hard voice. "By your own laws we have enough on you to consign you to the ocean lizards without any more trial. According to this man's thoughts, the two Freeman brothers beat the death trap by their own wits. The older one did it about two years ago. The other one—well, you saw that happen with your own eyes—but you didn't see the underwater swim or the dressing of a skeleton that fooled you."

"That means that George Freeman is

still alive?" David was up on his toes, shaking his hands like a trapped fighter. "Where is he? Does he know—"

"I'm right here," I said, folding my arms and taking two paces in David's direction. "And there's my brother Ken." I pointed to Zober. "Now what do you think, David? Uncle Willard?"

David and his father were almost beyond thinking. But David seized at a straw—an awfully frail straw.

"Smear that paint off their faces!" he demanded. "I'll bet they're a pair of imposters. I'd know George Freeman's voice anywhere—and this fellow doesn't sound the least bit like—"

The little old man in the blue and grey robe had a way of commanding silence simply by walking into the circle with his feeble brown hand outstretched.

"What pleasant guests we have to-day, Propsander. They seem to doubt your thought reading."

Propsander shrugged. The whole thing had grown too much for him, what with the conflicting stories the water had brought him. He knew he had gotten what every man *believed* to be the truth; but the welter of misimpressions had made him dizzy.

"If these two Paint-Faces are having pretty delusions that they are Freemans, there's one easy way to tell. The real Freeman brothers would surely recognize the statue of their great-grandfather."

I looked to Zober. He had not said one word to confirm or deny the revelation I had made. But it was plain to me now—everything. His size, his build, his silence to hold back the voice I would have recognized, his profile, his manner—yes, and his very noticeable interest in Loonza—all these were enough to convince me.

And on top of all this, *his* thoughts, in the water—had been the source of

Propsander's information that there were still two living Freemans! Was that the way he had put it? Yes, two living Freemans with a claim to the fortune!

It had to be. Why didn't Zober speak up and come to my rescue? Between the two of us, we would have our cousin David and Uncle Willard so thoroughly flabbergasted that they'd be ready to plunge over the rail.

"I don't believe it!" David yelled again. "Smear their faces!"

"We'll clear their faces of paint," said the cackling little voice of authority. "Then if these irate gentlemen refuse to recognize them, we'll make them prove their identity by looking at my collection of statues. Any Freeman son worthy of the name should be able to pick his own great-grandfather out of the fifteen or twenty old specimens I've kept stored in a certain closet."

The guards removed our paint, and then we stood face-to-face—Zober and I.

David and his father groaned. I was the real article and their groan practically proved it.

But Zober? *Was he my brother Ken?*

He was *not*! He was no one that I had ever seen before, *in the flesh*!

CHAPTER XVI

THE one person who gave a cry of delight to discover who Zober really was, was Loonza!

"My—my heartbreak!" she uttered with a funny little cry, half comic, half tragic; and she went to him and caught his hand and held it to her lips. "I—I thought you were killed!"

"I'm afraid it was George Freeman's brother who was killed," said Zober in a rich, mild voice. I liked the strength of the man. I was busy observing the

points of similarity and contrast between him and my late brother—and of course my heart was sinking with a terrible disappointment over Ken. Ken had not come to life after all. No—no such miracle. It was all a false hope. . . . But what a quick attachment I felt for this strange, fine looking Zober, now that he was revealed in face and voice. He was speaking gentle words to Loonza, who was almost sobbing with gladness. "I thought you would forget me. . . . You are so young. . . ."

"But you're young too," Loonza said.

The two of them seemed oblivious to us, their audience, and no one—not even the baffled cousin David—interrupted their seemingly sacred moment.

"Pretty little Loonza. . . . I have never told you. . . . But I'm not as young as—I mean, my age—it's a troublesome thing. Still—what *is* age—what difference—if you really care—"

Loonza sensed that the private conversation was a trifle too public for comfort. Or did she perhaps hold back a wisp of her romantic feeling from Zober—a part of her heart that now belonged to me? At any rate, she turned to me.

"George? Why didn't *you* say something, George? Aren't you going to speak to your brother Ken?"

"He isn't my brother," I said. "I was wrong."

"Ugh." This from Propsander, who by now had lost all faith in his ability to arrive at the truth by examining other people's thoughts. "We don't know a thing, Boss. Not a damn thing."

"If you're not Ken Freeman," Loonza wailed, "then what is your name?"

"My name *is* Ken Freeman," said Zober with a gracious nod, very, very serious, and studying me as intently as I was studying him. "But I'm not his brother. I'm his great-grandfather."

Two of the Paint-Faces almost

slipped and fell into the pool. Bud blinked hard. Loonza's fingertips fluttered to her lips.

"Say it again, please," she said, though her words came out a whisper.

"The little old man should know me," Zober said, and he began to smile. It was a restrained smile, but it expressed a terrible accusation. "I am his oldest ghagstic statue. If he will dust out the closet where he has stored fifteen or twenty old specimens, he will find one missing. I was never dead. I was *out*—in suspended animation, as they say. But after nearly eighty years, the elements wore through my coating, and I found myself to be alive, in my decaying shell. So I set myself free."

My little aged, gnarled great-step-uncle was oozing backward, wincing.

Zober came toward me and placed a hand on my shoulder.

"I hope my appearance won't upset you. I am your great-grandfather Freeman, son, and I take great pleasure in meeting you. In fact, I have been watching you rather closely. As soon as I learned that a member of an invading party had beat the death trap, I said to myself, that must be a relative of mine."

"How did you know—I mean—"

"When I crept out of my shell, many months ago, I floundered about, hiding like a stowaway, until your brother Ken arrived with an expedition. That was when I got acquainted with Loonza, and I attempted to learn about this land into which I had been reborn, so to speak. Without announcing my identity to anyone, I attached myself to your brother's party. But I wasn't quick enough on the dangers to save us from the tragedy of the Purple Walk. It might have caught all of us. By chance I was the one who escaped. Then, in my effort to play safe while I wedged my way into the good graces

of my gentle murderer, Mr. Montgomery, my stepbrother, I painted my face."

TO MY surprise, the little Mong said, "You've been an excellent assistant, Ken. I'm rather glad I preserved you."

Zober smiled. "I am rather glad, myself. To be quite honest, you are right, Montgomery, when you say that I would have exploited this land ruthlessly eighty years ago, and that my actions would have been attended by all manner of wasteful conflict among jealous industrialists on the earth. In the past several months I have been listening to your philosophies and learning my lessons. I have learned them well."

"I am honored," said the Mong.

"But all the while I believed that the Freemans might come into the picture again—sooner or later. Does any Paint-Face recall that a certain skeleton has been stored for many months in the little station under the rock? I placed it there one day—you didn't miss it, your honor—and my purpose was this. I guessed that some time the younger Freeman son might come, looking for his lost brother. And I foresaw that he might be forced to walk the Leopard Walk. If so, and if he were both resourceful and lucky, he might discover in it a means of saving his own life."

"Thank you," I said.

"Some day I hope that death trap can be removed," Zober said.

The little old man gave a low cackle that might have been amusement or the signal of an evil plan. Then he and Zober were challenging each other with their eyes, and the old man spoke what he knew was in the other's mind.

"I presume you think, now that you have emerged, that this world again belongs to you."

Zober smiled. "That's a question that will be decided by time. You've developed it into quite a world, Montgomery. You possess its resources. But you don't possess the people. You've given them a chance to live their own lives without much interference. That's as it should be. I couldn't improve on it. If I were to 'own' this region, there's not much that I would want to change—except the death trap."

"Well answered," said the little old man. "I tried to tell you such things long ago—before I murdered you. You wouldn't listen then."

"It's much easier for youth to take wisdom from an old man than from someone near his own age," Zober said.

"Then let me ask you this. If you were in command of this world, what would you do with culprits like these—these greedy invaders—"

His little brown arm made a gesture toward David and Uncle Willard, but he broke off short. Both men were standing with their backs against the wall, holding guns on us.

"You'll not do a damned thing about us!" David snapped. "Get to the window, every damned one of you."

Propsander gave a raw laugh. "Yeah? There's better'n a hundred foot drop below that window."

"That's the very point," David snarled. "Get moving."

CHAPTER XVII

IT WAS a fast scramble, with the husky magician starting things off. You might like him or you might hate him, but you had to admire his boldness in that moment. You might believe in his strange powers of reading other people's thoughts, or you might think him a fake, playing a high-powered bluff; but you had to give him credit for playing his power to the limit.

He raised both hands, palms forward, and moved toward David.

"Those guns won't shoot, you saps! I fixed 'em for you. They're dead. They're—"

"Is that so?" David shot Propsander through the heart. The bang of his pistol caused a nervous ripple over the waters of the tile-walled pool.

Propsander fell forward and dived at David's feet in his last convulsive moment of life. David leaped and a second shot went wild. We were all plunging forward—all of us toward the two. In the same instant a bowl tilted and tipped.

In the split-second of my rush for David Pemberton, I caught the strange sight out of the corner of my eye. Those water hornets! They had jumped, all in unison, toward David and his father. They struck the inner wall of the bowl like a mallet, and it tipped and fell. The water and the hornets spilled around the feet of the two men. They attacked at the ankles!

I saw a flash of fire from Uncle Willard's gun, and one of the Paint-Faces clutched at his belly and bolted into the wall. Then Uncle Willard slipped and lost his footing, and wailed. His gun clattered to the floor, and an on-rushing Paint-Face kicked it into the pool.

David shot at me twice, and one bullet cut a line along my forearm. The second was aimed for a kill, and that's how I would have taken it, if the dying magician hadn't been there. His shoulders sagged against David's ankles, and the resulting sidestep encountered the wriggling water hornets. With a yowl, David slipped back.

I was on him then, and had the gun out of his hands. He came at me. I struck at him. Then I flung the gun at him, he dodged, and it went sailing out the window. He wasn't coming back

for more. But he chose the wrong avenue of escape, for there was Zober—my noble ancestor—in his path.

David backed away. He bolted toward another room. Zober was ahead of him, and Zober's wide chest and fine muscles bluffed him out.

"Wouldn't you like to go down and try the Leopard Walk?" Zober asked. I'm sure he hadn't guessed what was coming when he put that question. No one knew—unless it was some of those devilish water hornets. For David, in his rush to cross around the end of the room, struck them again, and skidded.

HE BACKED into the window, tumbling. For an instant he hung on a balance like a teeter-totter, face up, arms up, knees kicking. The water hornets were all over his ankles, spiking him like mad. It was his kick that did it. He flung his legs upward and he toppled out.

When we came away from the window, several minutes later, our eyes were still echoing the last sight of David Pemberton, far below us in the crimson waters. A hundred and twenty feet below us, he had been only a dark shadow, kicking helplessly at the waves. And then another shadow had closed in on him. Not an ocean lizard, as I had supposed, but—as Loonza's practiced eyes knew—a swarm of water hornets.

"He certainly was attractive to them," she said, shaking her head.

"What will happen to him?" I asked.

"They'll force him out toward the sea . . . Then there'll be other, larger water animals waiting . . . but he'll never know about them."

The three of us—Loonza, Zober and I—now looked about to see what damage remained to be done, and we soon realized that enough had already been accomplished to restore peace and quiet to this tower-top palace. David, a

Paint-Face, and Propsander had lost their lives. Uncle Willard was missing.

What had happened to Uncle Willard? The last I had seen of him, he had been in the act of falling, and his gun had gone into the tile-walled pool.

Bud's eyes were large as he told us later, in deathly whispers, "You won't be seeing your Uncle Willard any more, George. Not unless you wait around for eighty years."

"What happened?"

"The Paint-Face stunned him, I guess. Anyway he had an awful sick look and his eyes were half closed when they dragged him down to a room where there's a big funnel in the floor and a circular wall of glass."

"Was the Mong there?"

"Gee, yes. He's the one that pulled a lever and made all the ghagstic rain down. That sort of straightened your Uncle Willard up for a minute, and then—well, from then on he was all coated. It turned him into a regular statue, and they carted him off and fixed him up on a pedestal . . ."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE little old man knew that he was about to die. His officials were gathered around him as he explained the strange relationship with Zober—his own stepbrother of many years ago.

"You may be sure that Zober will govern you well, and that he will never sell your own world—this Crimson Sea—to any invaders. Believe in him—even as I have learned to believe in him . . ."

And then his eyes gave a last curious flicker of interest and it was almost as if he were enjoying his own bit of mischief in his final moment.

"Some of my statues . . . they may come to life . . . If so, they will still have life before them . . . When you

tell them that, ask them if they are very angry . . . for what I have done . . .”

And then he ceased to breathe, and he was like an image of himself carved in old wood . . .

We swam swiftly across the crimson water, trying to overtake Loonza. She was leading us a merry chase; but just as I thought I was going to fade out and stop from sheer exhaustion, she whirled about and led us into a little cove where the soft amber lights of the rocks glowed down upon the three of us. Her golden flesh shone with unearthly beauty, and her smile was tantalizing. Together we sat on the low rocks with our feet dangling in the warm waters. Zober sat on one side of her, I on the other.

At first there were only the low sounds of our feet dipping in the waves, and the light click of the shells woven into her bathing suit as she nestled back against the wall of rock—and then—

“What a musical sound the waves make,” Zober observed.

“I told you about it once long ago,” Loonza said. “Do you remember? George, you remember, I’m sure.”

“I remember,” I said.

“Listen. It’s a little song. Loonza . . . lenza . . . linza . . . lee . . . And that’s what my mother heard when she named me.”

“It’s a pretty name,” I said. “People on the earth would like your name . . . Loonza, do you think you would like the earth?”

When she didn’t answer, Zober said, “Loonza, I’m going to need your good help here in our little ocean world.”

She looked up. “Aren’t you going back to the earth, Zober?”

“No. No, Loonza, my place is here now. I hope you’ll stay with me.”

When Loonza decided to be silent, I spoke again. “Do you remember the

moon that I’ve told you about. If you would be my wife—go back with me—go back and see the wonders of the earth—”

Loonza trembled as if she were cold. She pressed my hand. “It’s a little too terrifying. The moon—yes, I would like that. But all those other things—industries, courts, laws, lobbying, taxes, people that shout at you and make you buy things, and all your radios and automobiles and trains and ships that you have told me about—”

“They’re really not so bad. We like them, on the earth. If you were there—”

“No, I’d never be like that. I’m a person who likes to have my light the same day after day. It never changes here. Never . . . But I’ve liked you, George. You’ve been very kind. And you were the only one who could understand my heartbreak.”

I laughed softly. “Maybe that’s because I’m distantly related to the man who caused it.” I drew a deep breath. “Two of the crewmen, Blanchard and Casey are ready to take me back soon.”

“A few more days of visit first, George,” Zober said. “This is the first time I’ve had a chance to catch up on earth news for the past eighty years or so. I’d like a little fuller story of my descendants before you go back.”

“It’s a long story,” I said.

“May I listen too,” Loonza asked.

“By all means,” said Zober. “After all, if you’re going to marry me, you’ll become the step-grandmother to a pretty big family. I hope you won’t mind.”

“Whoo. Will I be a grandmother as soon as I’m married?”

I laughed. “Dreadful, isn’t it? You’ll be my great grandmother.”

“George!” she wailed, “will you promise not to tell anyone I’m your great grandmother.”

"I promise."

"If it's a real promise, you know, we should seal it with a kiss—like this." She bent over to me and kissed me—as

sweet a kiss as one could ever ask from a prospective relative three generations removed. She said, "That's what your great-grandfather taught me."

JUST SLEEPING

By LEE McCANN

JUST sleeping takes up about one-third of each total life-span. Yet, though each one of us regularly goes bye-bye every night, so little is known about the nature of sleep that it remains a profound mystery second only in keeping its secrets to the mystery of death whose twin it has been called.

However much habit may take for granted, sleep is not simple, it is a highly complex phenomenon. Passive, relative to walking, on its own plane, in its own mysterious fashion, sleep is active, dynamic and creative. It is the night side of living when power is strong in the other half of what the English writer Tyrrell calls the self of the Double Now.

Sleep cannot be summed up in its one word, for there are more different kinds of sleep than you may have realized. First in importance comes of course what we call normal sleep, which does not always justify its adjectives. Next is the sleep of anaesthesia which nearly everyone today at some time or other has to undergo. Yes, this is one kind of sleep, anaesthesiologists themselves call it that. "I put him to sleep once," one of them will say, nodding casually to a former patient whose name is already forgotten. So specialized is this field that a single nerve can be put to sleep, or the deep unconsciousness obtained which surgeons call fourth-plane ether.

Akin to this, since it is also chemically induced, though different in effect and purpose, is narcosynthesis. This kind of sleep became a household word during the war when it conferred its blessings of long-period rest upon soldiers whose exhausted, frenzied nerves had endured beyond the limit of combat fatigue. Good post-war use is made of narcosynthesis by psychiatrists who find in it a valuable speed-instrument. A patient in a light sleep of pentothal sodium talks easily, freed from inhibitions of the waking mind. The analyst in this way gets a quick look-see at hidden thoughts and feelings which saves his time and the patient's too.

Everyone knows about hypnotic or mesmeric sleep, though only about one person in five is capable of experiencing it. For this reason its therapeutic use, always in dispute, has been largely superseded by the hypnotic drugs.

Less well known is the sleep of catalepsy about which I shall have some things to tell you later. It is the state of suspended animation which so nearly resembles death that occasional tragic mistakes have occurred due to this.

One must of course include on our list the peculiar sleep called trance. During this the body is inert; the known self of the tenant "away," and what appears to be an alien personality takes over and expresses itself through the physical vehicle. Spiritualists believe this secondary personality is a return of the dead to communicate. Scientists for the most part believe it is a form of auto-hypnosis. What it really is no one knows.

Though not true sleep, we must not omit to mention the threshold states between sleeping and waking, when the night side interpenetrates the day side with often strange results of conflict or cooperation. Day dreaming, certain kinds of extra-sensory perception, delirium, the dreams and delusions of opium, hashish, alcohol, marijuana and a host of others are among the threshold expressions which are a rich, and except for a study of clinical symptoms, as yet little tilled field for research.

There are many variants and subclassifications to these sleeps which might be made. The end of the list is the final sleep of death, which belongs here because under certain conditions—adrenalin, for instance—is not always so final, and may in a not distant future become less so.

The newest and most sensational discovery about anaesthesia-sleep has been made by a group of doctors in the Soviet Union, as reported in the CHICAGO SUN. The inspiration of these scientists came, it appears, from good old John Barleycorn—I always knew he was a useful member of society! They noted that a drunk is less liable to broken bones from a fall, or if he does break them he gets over it more quickly than a soberer brother. To shorten a long story, they found, after much experiment, that anaesthesia-sleep has in its own right healing power and toxic immunization.

Cats under ether were given lethal doses of cyanide and came out of it unharmed and lively as ever. Epileptic convulsions and brain lesions in cats were healed in this way. Human wounds and burns, otherwise fatal, yielded also to this treatment. So, "sleep that knits up the ravel'd sleeve of care" has now been set by the Soviets to knitting the ravelled sleeve of health besides. Although this is in the specialized field of anaesthesiology, such a discovery cannot fail to throw open the whole problem and mystery of unconsciousness to new speculation and experiment. In connection with the Russian findings, some curious bits of confirmatory evidence come to

memory.

IN THAT fascinating book, *A SEARCH IN SECRET EGYPT*, the author, Paul Brunton, tells of knowing Tahra Bey, Egypt's most illustrious fakir. Tahra Bey was an M.D., finely educated and of scientific temper. Like other fakirs he demonstrated burial alive while in specially prepared cataleptic sleep. Brunton, with a group of doctors, witnessed one of these demonstrations. Tahra Bey told him afterward that such a burial, provided it was not prolonged beyond three days, was marvellously invigorating and a health restorative. He believed this was because only in such a deathlike sleep could mind and body together rest deeply and without interruption from outside.

Tahra Bey said that anciently the Egyptian Dervishes had made this discovery when charged with the punishment of criminals, which they did by burying them alive after first preparing them for the ordeal by catalepsy. When the men were disinterred it was found that "they were marvelously cured of their diseases, no matter what kind, while they lay buried in the hot sand."

Some years ago I met a Brahmin in New York, about whom I was told that he had effected some cures in cases where the doctors had been unsuccessful. I asked him what his method was. He told me he trained the patient in the art and technique of rest. This he said was not easy and to some patients impossible, requiring much time and patience. But where it was mastered, and the individual could enter sleep from a pre-condition of profound relaxation of mind and body, then deep being took over the work of healing which proceeded rapidly. That, he said, was his only method.

Karl von Cosel, whose strange story of Elena appeared in *FANTASTIC ADVENTURES*, makes yet another contribution in this connection. After von Cosel had exhumed Elena's body, he examined it for bacteria. Of this he writes:

"At last Elena had been cured of her disease. She died from pulmonary tuberculosis and I had always found plenty of bacilli in my examinations. There was no trace of them now. For her to die was to be cured of t.b."

Von Cosel's belief that the body could have a second chance after death, organic condition permitting, may not be too far-fetched. After all, we do have adrenalin, which would have seemed just as fantastic before the rise of endocrinology. And I have read that special precautions are always taken in criminal electrocution for fear that somebody will bring the victim back to life. The presentation of von Cosel's ideas may yet take its place some day among those "firsts" to which Editor Palmer points with special pride.

Naturally nobody wants to be cured by burial alive or any other kind, but if the Russians are right this will be made unnecessary by a new technique. Some days we may have anaetheriums

which will take care of certain classes of illness. And can you think of a pleasanter way of being cured than by just sleeping through it?

It is possible that, in the case of some individuals anyway, there may be further benefits to this matter of the super-sleep and revival *in extremis*. Two women are known to me, each of whom "died," technically speaking, under operation for ruptured appendix, and was brought back by adrenalin. Both lives were greatly changed after this, charged with a heightened dynamic of mind and vitality beyond what could be credited to recovery from a brief illness. One of them, from a rather futile butterfly, became a legalistic career name. The other, a doctor, told me she was fully conscious of the change in herself which she attributed to the "going-out." She said that it had given her greater mental vigor and enlarged perspective. It is a hopeful thought for those who get back in this way—and also for those who don't.

This thing of the "going-out" is not confined to such incidents. It appears to be a not too unusual property of night sleep. There are many people who say that they frequently experience in sleep the sensation of leaving the body and traveling in another dimension of time-space. I know a physicist quite high in electronic brackets who says he does this. He told me that he had cultivated a natural ability by a study of yoga until he can project at will by going to sleep with the determination to do so.

PERHAPS the most controlled and famous instance of this kind was Ed Morrell, the ex-bandit about whose life and singular power Jack London wrote his last novel, *THE STAR ROVER*. John Wilstach, in a letter to *FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES*, told the true story of Morrell and his friendship with London to whom he gave full details of his experience. Morrell lived to be a very old man. His super-sleeping, his "going-out" while in San Quentin prison had renewed his strength and enabled him to survive torture so fiendish that other prisoners were wrecked, and died like flies under such agony. Now here was no ether sleep, though there is a parallel. It was auto-hypnosis that did the trick for Morrell. He learned to put his body into "dead" sleep, then to separate himself from his body until he stood beside it looking down on it. Then he went out through prison walls to the world beyond. There he saw scenes and people that were strange to him, but that he did encounter later after he had left the prison, and in his proper body.

Sleep, when it is informed with the ability and determination of Ed Morrell and my friend the physicist, is the true vehicle of time travel, that subject so dear to science-fictioners and so full of their mechanical contraptions not one of which does sleep require. Jack London sent his hero roving through all his previous incarnations. Most fiction writers send their characters time-travelling

at least as far as Atlantis or the year 2500 A.D. But to most of us what Morrell *really* did is wonderful enough without embroidery—the guy was good!

How many people can do this going-out? Probably more than you think. Such people are cautious in telling their experience. Morrell told London that he had never mentioned it to any one else for fear they would think he was crazy. That's how it is. Brunton tells of an R.A.F. officer who was operated on. Under ether he retained full consciousness of himself floating above his body and so witnessing the surgery done upon it.

I can match that story. A biologist I know, now in government research, had a similar experience when operated on in his teens. He came out from the anaesthetic exclaiming in triumph, "I did it, I did it! I got out of my body and watched them. I remember it all."

The knowledge and practice of hypnosis are very ancient. Legend and the veiled hints of early writers make it the very heart of the Eleusinian and Osirian Mysteries. In these, for the final initiatory rites the candidate was put into hypnotic sleep in a manner that permitted him to remember his experience. He was then, by the exercise of the priestly will-power, "sent out" of the body. The purpose of this rite is said to have

been the demonstration of immortality to the initiate by the separation—fact or illusion—of the subtle, eternal body from its gross, transient counterpart while yet the acolyte was in earthly life.

"Arm thyself with the torch of the Mysteries and in the earthly night thou shalt discover thy luminous Double, thy Celestial Self."

Controlled medical experiment has proved that deprivation of sleep beyond a certain point disorganizes thinking and temporarily creates schizophrenic symptoms. The encephalograph has shown that the electrical rhythms of sleep are markedly different from those of waking. Perhaps if we had a more scientific understanding of the frequencies of sleep and the laws which control them, why presto, we could all be taking off on time-trips.

From all of which it would seem that when the drawbridge of sleep is lowered, and we cross to its dark courtyard, we live another life and meet our other, elusive self, wise and beneficent, though strange, and as invisible to the waking mind as a star at midday. So, if your family calls you lazy-bones, accuses you of sleeping your head off—it is always the family that does this—you'll know now what to tell them, won't you?

"Our little lives are rounded by a sleep."

THE END



POWER!



IT IS COMMON knowledge that the United States, more any any other country on Earth, realizes the need for the utilization of machines to make wealth. But to make mass production and the consequent use of machines practical, it is necessary to have at hand vast amounts of energy to run them.

The United States, like other countries, has three basic sources of energy in exceptionally lavish quantities—coal, oil, and water power. Oil of course is used primarily in powering mobile machines and makes itself felt more indirectly in production than the other two.

The amount of electrical energy generated in the United States last year was more than three hundred billion kilowatt hours! Oil, as the basic source of this power, accounts for a relatively small part of this power production. Water power in the form of the gigantic output of Boulder Dam and others of the same ilk, accounts for perhaps fifteen or twenty percent of the total. It is coal that provides the greatest amount of electrical energy in this country as elsewhere. It is coal that turns the wheels of civilization.

A coal-electric power plant is one of the most efficient machines designed by man. Each plant represents one small element of a gigantic structure that is almost nation-wide. In a given area, hundreds of generating stations are linked together in a huge grid or network. If power fails at one point, the plant is quickly disconnected and another thrown in so that at all times it is possible to

provide power regardless of the conditions in a given line. The only possible real breakdown that may occur is when the power lines themselves are down. In such an emergency nothing can be done but to re-string them, meanwhile making use of such portable plants as are available.

In the average coal-electric plant, coal from the mines is brought in to the plant by the carload. It is pulverized in specially designed crushers, broken down to the consistency of a liquid almost, mixed with vast volumes of air and then sprayed into a boiler. The boiler, in some of the larger plants as large as an ordinary house, converts water into steam by the millions of pounds per hour. This incredible quantity of steam is fed to a series of high, then decreasing, pressure turbines which in turn, rotate huge generators. Since the country has standardized on sixty-cycle alternating current, the only major difference in the generators is in their voltage output which may range from hundreds of volts to tens of thousands of volts.

IN ADDITION to the major generators, there are always stand-by machines, ready to take over any additional increases in load. There is always a margin of safety here. This is necessary because electricity cannot be stored. It must be generated as it is used—no slower and no faster. This means then, that the generators must put out varying outputs of energy in accordance with demand. Hence the need for stand-by generators.

In the generation of electric power, a new element enters the field. Atomic power is in the experimental stages and right now pilot plants have been constructed, which are essentially uranium piles whose heat will be utilized to work a steam boiler and the turbine-generator chain. If this is ever done on a large scale—and it appears likely that it will be—there is in sight no limit to the amount of power that may be generated.

In the field of electric power generation from atomic reactions however, there is a still more important subject yet to be discovered and studied. Scientists suspect that there is some way of converting atomic energy directly into the easily-used electricity without the need for steam boilers, etc. As yet, no one has the faintest idea of how this is possible. No work has been done on the process and its method of functioning is not even remotely suspected. The main thing is that the concept exists. What this can mean in terms of power generation is unbelievable.

In the United States as well as in countries that are beginning their industrial era, the need for power is tremendous. There is simply not enough capacity to satisfy the almost insatiable demands of industry and the private user. We are throwing-up plants, building dams and otherwise preparing electricity as fast as we can and still the demand is unsatisfied. Should this process of direct-conversion ever be discovered, it will answer the most pressing problem of our time. Power and more power is needed.

When technicians speak of atomic power, they are automatically thinking of its use to create electricity. There is no other form of energy that remotely compares with electricity in its ease of application as well as generation. There is a world of difference between connecting a lathe or a punch press to a steam engine, a gasoline engine, or an electric motor! The latter is of course, the best.

Carter T. Wainwright



MUTATIONS



LIFE is ever changing its inheritable patterns. From old stock, new characteristics arise. This change is due to alterations in the hereditary substances, and is called "mutation."

Mutations are not, as some people believe, confined to monstrosities, but everyone has many mutations. Many of your hereditary elements are different from the normal, because of sudden permanent changes that occurred in some very remote ancestor. Most of these changes are inherited from both parents at once. Mutations are responsible for inborn bodily idiosyncrasies and for mental peculiarities that have an hereditary basis. If it were not for mutations, progress would be impossible in living things. Matter could never even reach the "living" stage, still the majority of mutations are harmful and can even kill before birth. As the people saddled with harmful mutations tend to die off, so do the people having rare and beneficial mutations enrich the race. Although our death rate is high and medical science does everything possible to prevent deaths caused by bad mutations it really means that we are actually perpetuating the bad mutations. This increases the frequency of mutations and increases our ills. It is the aim of biologists to some day find a way to control mutations and to produce desired mutations at will.

For many years, attempts to change the genes have been futile. They are so well protected being inside the cell and the body, that attempts to change them without killing the body have failed. X-rays and other radioactive substances, however, have been somewhat successful. These rays steal through the bodily defenses and once they are inside they attack the gene itself. By this method many hundreds of mutations have been produced

in one individual that never would have occurred in him naturally. These mutations plague his descendants, but usually not himself. Mustard gas has a similar reaction.

Scientists are still unable to direct the kind of mutations that will occur, so nearly all of them are harmful.

A mutation seldom has any effect unless it is inherited from both parents at the same time, but it can still be handed down. It may be hundreds of generations after a certain mutation has occurred, before two germ cells carrying the same peculiarity will by chance meet. Then a child will be born that bears the brunt of a germicidal disaster that had occurred many generations before. It is like a time bomb, with action much more delayed than any other known. The ailments will be handed down and will reappear at long, irregular intervals till the line containing it dies out from its effects. After a mutation is produced, so far as is known, it can not be repaired.

In view of these facts, atomic bombs that have already been exploded, will kill many more people in following generations than at the time they were exploded. Its radiation has created in its survivors, hundreds of mutations that will damage generations to come. Even the peacetime uses of atomic energy, and the use of X-ray will create monstrosities in the future if we do not guard their use with the utmost precautions. Now that we have atomic energy at our disposal, it is our duty to prevent these atomic sins from killing our very distant descendants. Yet through studying these inner factors, we may discover further secrets of their natures which will allow progress at a faster rate than has ever been attainable.

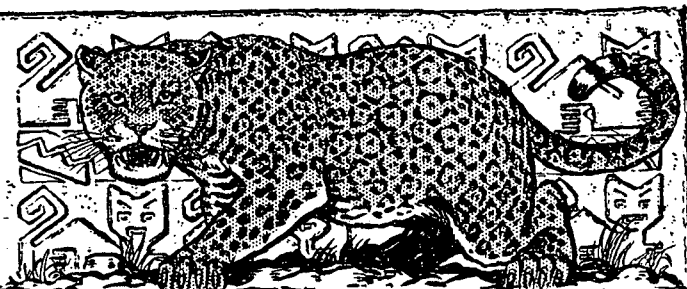
Frances Yerxa

SCIENTIFIC



The lost cities of Yucatan and Guatemala literally number hundreds, while the jungles are networked by equally ancient highways once paved with long, hewn stones and then covered with a three-inch paving of the hardest cement. Today one is most liable to detect them from the air. One of these ruins is the ancient shrine of Cozumel Island, where the Chanés are said to have landed when they first came to Yucatan. If one should stop to dig, the ancient boulevard, more imposing than those of Rome in her palmiest days, would come to light. Shown here is a portion of the ancient roadway of Cozumel.

This is the mysterious Totem of the Black Tiger. Ek Balam, an emperor who founded a great city and gave it his own name, which means "black tiger" is thus linked with the totem. In background is the tiger design of ancient Peru.



It would seem, from the research into the totem of the tiger that the Popul Vuh and the fall of Xibalba is dated not earlier than 179 A.D., when the Tutul Xiu came into power. However, the returning priesthood may have censored the old book so that an earlier war would appear to be their late victory.

Recent discoveries leave us with the conviction that we are standing upon the brink of a momentous discovery, such as seeing the revelation of the symbolism behind the Great Sphinx, which is of unknown antiquity, and which, strangely enough, is a human head on a tiger's body. Is it the same totem?



MYSTERIES

TOTEM OF THE TIGER

By L. TAYLOR HANSEN

**What is the secret meaning of the totem
of The Black Tiger? Who was Ek Balam?**

BEFORE the time when Votan landed upon the shores of Guatemala," reads an old manuscript, "Ek Balam was a great Emperor throughout the land, whose fame was most illustrious, and who founded a city after his own name." Yet such is the power of time that we know nothing more concerning this monarch, save that his name means "The Black Tiger."

There is, however, one city of legendary fame, which is described by The Popul Vuh, as the Capital of the great Underworld-Fire Empire (Ximenez says Hell) and which had defied Votan. The name of that city is Xibalba, which is certainly more like Balam than it is like any of the Quiname names of which we are acquainted. Was this the city then, founded by The Black Tiger, which first comes to our attention as the capital of the Votanic Empire?

Thus we have a hint that back of the time of The Flood, there had been a Tiger-Snake War in which the Snake had been the victor. It is natural that two places are to be thought of as Tiger Centers—one in South America and the other in the Mississippi where Decoodah hints of the ancient power of "The Red Lion." This seems like a scattering of early power, and the only way which we can guess whether this reconstruction is correct, is to see how later facts fit this theory.

Guillemot, an authority I am not able to obtain, is quoted by Fossey¹ as saying that some Peruvian tribes once fled northward along the spine of the great intercontinental Cordilleras. What caused their flight is not stated. Other authorities have noted a legend of a flight by sea from Peru to Oajaca.² This is certainly borne out in the similarity of Oajaca and Nazca designs, both of which feature cat faces.

It is, however, from later books, such as The Popul Vuh that we get our most substantial suggestions upon which to reconstruct the past. Xbalanque, the Quiche hero who conquered Xibalba, has a name which reminds us of the magnificent ruins of Palenque, in Chiapas, often men-

tioned as the site of the legendary Xibalba.

Furthermore, the famous Balam-Quiche is often called The Father of the Quiches, and Brasseur adds some welcome information when he tells us that Copan was founded by the Nahuas but owed its origin (according to Bancroft) to a fierce chieftain named Balam. Now this looks like an amalgamation of two powers on the part of Xibalba conquerors, or that the city of the Ancient Chanes was conquered by a combination of tribes. That this is probably the true guess, we find in the following additional historical lights. That before the coming of the Quiches the land was occupied by The Tamub (whose capital was at Utatlan), The Ilocab and The Pokomams sometimes known as the "Thirteen Tribes of Tec-Pan." Brasseur gives an origin in an eastern land for the first two, and the name "Thirteen Tribes of the People of Pan" certainly identifies the latter as Quinames.

According to Fuentes the capital of the Tamub Tribes was known as Utatlan or Gumarcaah³, and later we learn from Ximenez that Gukumatz, the great Quiche monarch took upon himself the nature of a number of animals, or in other words took allies one of which was an Eagle, and another, coagulated blood, which is sometimes in the north thought of symbolical of The Wolf, who is often a death totem.

After this, we are told that Gukumatz descended from the depths of Xibalba, to the heights of Utatlan, where he sought the ancient capital. Then by removing his court to the ancient site and rebuilding it from its ruins, he aroused the pride of all those of Quiche blood. (Ximenez.) Gumarcaah, the earlier name for Utatlan, has enough the sound of Kukumatz for us to believe

¹ These Peruvians are called Huaves. See notes on them by Burgoa in *Geog. Descrip. Oajaca*. Also Murguía *Esta dist. Guajaca in Soc. Mex. Geog. Boletín. Tom. VII.*

² Fuentes is not now available and is to be found only in Juarros: *Hist. of Guatemala which was largely fashioned upon his work.*

¹ See Fossey: *Mexique pp. 50 and 51.*

that the famous king was named after the ancient capital of his ancestors which he restored to its former glory.

Now if it is true that this Utatlan is in South America, this story has a most surprising similarity to the legendary origin of the Quichua (Inca) and their subsequent history down to the return of their tribe from its wanderings in the forests of the north.

All of this seems to show that The Tiger was displaced by The Snake. Then, leaving the ancient capital, he wandered very far afield. Does the Popul Vuh's mention of a Xibalban Princess for a mother mean that the exiled army fell upon and amalgamated with some colony of The Chanes? For we must remember that Xbalanque who is the official ancestor of the Quiches had a Xibalban princess for a mother, and the birth evidently took place after the death of the two first heroes. This version seems to be borne out by later mention of Culucan as the place where they had remained and, by a migration in company with the "Thirteen Tribes of Tec-Pan" whom they later fought. Could this place have been the Mississippi Valley?

His later name of Quichi may have only been a corruption of the Nahuatl name for him and all of the other "ancestors of the country"—the Chichimecs. It has been translated to mean "People of the forests." If the Quichi are the Chichimecs, and it seems probable, then the Chichimec Migration in which they marched by the thousands from the northern forests toward the south, has been recorded by many authorities. Upon the way down they apparently not only displaced and drove out the Natchez, but also the elegant city of Tula, pride of the civilized Toltecs, fell before their power.

From their own words, we hear of their amalgamation with many tribes before their final descent on the Quiname capital, and of their raids upon the travelling merchants of that city. From them we also learn that their god Tobil, which in another version suggests "clashing of metal arms," and in still another, "mountain of fire," was the first god to demand human sacrifice in exchange of his gift of fire. The meaning here is obscure because Xibalba and the Quinames are usually thought of as having fire from time immemorial. Nevertheless, other authorities also suspect that the barbaric custom of human sacrifice actively entered the Mexican and Central American historical picture after the momentous march and conquests of the Quichi and their allies.

There is one point which might throw the figure of this Emperor Gukumatz far into the background, and suggest that he was confused with later monarchs by a similarity of achievements. And that is that he is said to have been the father of Itzayul, which certainly sounds like, a combination of Itza and Yehl (the hero of the South Sierran Miwok version of the Popul Vuh being Yayul, whose son was Falcon⁴). This would make Gukumatz not the last conquering monarch to

retake a country lost to his ancestors but himself a distant ancestor, since the Miwok must be suspected of being a Quiche fragment. The likeness of the name to Xelhua, pronounced Yehl-wa, and meaning "Ancient Yehl," must also be noted. This is an extremely early figure since he is sometimes spoken of as a giant, sometimes confused with Votan and sometimes thought of as an ancestor of the Toltecs.⁵ If Emperor Gukumatz was his father, therefore, he must be thought of as lost in the depths of antiquity, and his accomplishments, like those of Ek Balam, antedate the main Votanic Empire.

In the ruins of Palenque which are crumbling under the crushing embrace of the forest octopus, is often pictured a double headed lion throne. This very throne is partially uncovered at Uxmal, and may indeed be the throne of the Quiche monarchs.

The lost cities of Yucatan and Guatemala literally number hundreds, while the jungles are networked by equally ancient highways once paved with long hewn stones, and then covered with a three-inch paving of the hardest cement. Today one is most liable to detect them by the air. When flying over the jungle, one suddenly notices a line of *lifted* trees which neither twists nor turns but travels straight ahead from unknown point to unknown point. One of these runs to the ancient shrine of Cozumel Island, where the Chanes are said to have landed when they first came to Yucatan. It is to be easily traced to the edge of the water and picked up again on the other side of the channel. If one should get out and seek out this line of lifted jungle, there will still be nothing to betray the old highway for the jungle has crept over it with a thousand entangling roots. But if one should stop to dig, then the ancient boulevard, of which Rome in the palmiest days of her grandeur could well be proud, will come to light.

In the impenetrable tree-carpet which surrounds the ancient Lake Peten of Guatemala are more ruins.⁶ The modern tribes who live there have

⁴ See *Myths of the Southern Sierra Miwak* by S. A. Barrett, *Amer. Arch. and Eth.* Vol. 16 No. 1, Univ. of Cal. Press.

⁵ Xelhua was considered to have built the Cholula Pyramid according to *Codex Mexicana in Kingsborough's Antiquities*. Other authorities who add sidelights upon this ancient Otomi or possibly a Quiname figure, are Gondra in *Prescott's Hist. of the Conq. of Mex.* Veytia, *Hist. Ant. Mej.*; Humboldt's *Melanges*; Brasseur De Bourbourg *Hist. Nat. Civ. and Gallatin in Am. Ethnol. Soc. Trans.* V. I.

⁶ The likeness of this name to the sacred Lake Pepen or Peten which was the source of the Pepen River in the Mississippi Valley as often mentioned by Decoodah is interesting. Both seem to literally mean "island."

forgotten the name of the lost Metropolis, but they do remember that the Lake was once supposed to have lain upon an arm of the sea, and at that time had the name of Lake Itza. Furthermore, their eyes will light at the name "Itiwana," who, they declare was an ancestor of theirs "before The Flood."

It is easy to believe that once the ocean level was higher, for like the jungles of Matto Grosso, the tales of the most magnificent ruins drift back to the tangled lowlands from the interior highlands which are terraced from end to end as if a once teeming population lived there when they were the shore-line of the sea, and as tradition says, Lake Peten was a charming landlocked harbor which would easily tempt the fleet of Votan III, the migrating Emperor of The Chanes.

¹ *The story of the eastern empire is one of the most fascinating and most persistent in the ancient annals. When the tribes were gathered upon Mt. Hacavitz, the elder four sacrificers died, the two sons of Balam Quiche, Quocaib and Quocavib along with it seems two other princes, Qoacutec and Qoahau travelled to the east across the sea from whence their fathers had come to receive the "sign of royalty" from the monarchs there named Nacxit (Brasseur says Acxtil Quetzalcoatl, though apparently on little authority except a similarity of names which this Honduran monarch bore). The quotation from the Popul Vuh about Nacxit is as follows: "Now this is the name of The Monarch of The People of The East. And when they arrived before Lord Nacxit, the name of the Emperor, and the sole Judge, whose power was without limit, behold, he granted them the Sign of Royalty, and all that represents it; hence came the sign of the rank of Ahpop and of Ahpop Canha (Prince elect?), and Nacxit finally gave them the insignia of royalty. Many things they brought upon their return, which they received, paintings and books and things recorded in the histories."*

"The three princes who went east to receive the Royalty, grew old," says another version, "but before their death they had established the city of Izmachi."

Apparently, this is what is meant in all the annals when it is said that the sun first arose upon this mountain, i.e. the receipt of Royalty.

One document differs from the Popul Vuh, and states that one brother went north to Anahuac, and sought the investiture of kingship from the Princes of Tula in Culhuacan, but found the great valley in Turmoil. Quocaib, then still away, he returned to his native city, betrayed his brother's wife and usurped the throne before Quocaib finally returned some two years later.

For information on this see the works of Brasseur. Also, Ximenez: Hist. de los Reyes del Quiche now lost but quoted by Brasseur and others. The chief authority is the Ms. Annals of the Cakchiquel or Memorial de Tecpan—Atitland. Bancroft Vol. V, pp. 552 to 560.

If this is true, we then have three geological changes in sea level on the Atlantic Coast, which should help us to date the civilizations. First, we have the low level when the island benches of the Caribbean apparently housed an "eastern empire," the same from which came Votan, and perhaps the same to which Balam-Quiche instructed his sons to go in order to confirm his conquests.⁷

We then have this evidence of sea-level which was considerably higher than that at present, and lastly, the present level which must have been more or less stable for the last two thousand years, because of the best scientific reasons in the world—the Mayan dates upon the ruins at that level which we are at least able to read, even though we can read no more of what the stelae might be saying.

Summing up, then, the Quiches, the so-called Tiger Tribes, have so many points in common with the Chichimecs that they might be considered to be identical, and apparently, together with the Nahuas, The Eagle and The Wolf, and possibly others, swept into power along with the Tutul Xius, or perhaps in Yucatan, following the Tutul Xius.

The god Tohil demanding sacrifice in return for fire seems to indicate that the sacrificing priesthood from the Quinames also joined the rebels, and this would date the Popul Vuh and the fall of Xibalba as having taken place not earlier than 179 A.D. when the Tutul Xiu came into power, and probably about the eighth century or after the fall of Tula. That is *unless* the returning priesthood censored, as it were, the old book and rewrote parts of it so that a far earlier war would appear to be their late victory. In the opinion of the writer, the latter is the probable answer. Especially so, since in the abandoned metropolis of Palenque, there is an entire lack of warlike subjects, suggesting the hand of The Great Reformer had rearranged its sculpture and decorations before its abandonment to the jungle.

If we knew the story of The Tiger, then, we would without doubt, know the story of the entire American scene from before the days of Votan and The Great Flood to after the return of the Sacrificing Priesthood who rode back into power with an amalgamation of outlaw bands. Perhaps it would begin with the coming of a round-headed Asiatic people during the interglacial when the fierce saber-toothed cats of the age gave them their totem.

Suppose we had the magic mirror which it is said that Aristotle tried so hard to invent—a mirror which could see back through the past and into the future.⁸ Into it, peering, we might have watched the "Balam" tribes rise to power. Illus-

⁸ *It has been said that if Aristotle had been successful and had fashioned his mirror, and then sitting down in the quiet of his beautiful home, had been able to look ahead for his thousand years into the future, he would have died of a broken heart.*

trious monarchs who are today but names, would pass our vision—Ek Balam, Balām-Quiche and Nima-Quiche, called the fifth of his house. Perhaps we would see the ancient amalgamation with the Snake, for Balam-Quiche certainly suggests that,⁹ and we would see the scattering of the tribe from and the regaining of its ancient seat of power, suggested in the story of Kukumatz. We might see the momentous continental march of the Chichimec Allies and their first defeat by the still-powerful Xibalba, and then perhaps their resort to brigandry and their embracing of the barbarous religion of Tohil, made even more barbarous by their desperate situation on Mt. Hacavitz where they “ever faced hunger.”¹⁰

But turning our mirror upon the future, can we

⁹ In this regard it is interesting that Ordonez should say that anciently, the name “Quiche” was applicable to the Votanic Empire, as they had the same origin.

see any possibility for the recovery of this titanic saga of a people? Or, turning it back upon the past, can we ever catch a glimpse of the time when Balam Quiche instructed his sons to go to the ancient eastern capital for coronation? Or the almost fantastic fact that the old scripts report that one son obeyed and went, the sea trip taking him years, while the other son went to the much closer province of Culhuican for his coronation.

Like Aristotle, our magic mirror fails us, however, and leaves us staring into space. Yet it leaves us with the conviction that we were standing upon the brink of some momentous discovery, such as seeing the revelation of the symbolism behind the Great Sphinx of Egypt, which they say is of unknown antiquity, and which consists of a human head upon a tiger's body.

¹⁰ Among other authorities, Torquemada says that human sacrifice began with the Quichi march to power.

FORTEAN ASPECTS OF THE FLYING DISKS

By MARX KAYE

ARE THE flying discs the product of another world?

Before snickering at this question, the reader is requested to wade through the formidable but thought-awakening *Books of Charles Fort*, published for the Fortean Society by Henry Holt & Company, 1941, namely: *The Book of the Damned*, *New Lands*, *Lo!* and *Wild Talents*.

The argument of this article is as follows:

1. If the flying discs are a new phenomenon in earthly skies it may be that some foreign power is ready to test out a new weapon, or that it is one of our own, because it must now be admitted that the discs are solid objects which are not the product of Nature. They travel against the wind and at rapidly varying velocities, also changing direction of flight with great frequency, according to numerous observations throughout the nation.

2. If, however, the flying discs are not a new phenomenon, and if they have been seen repeatedly in past centuries before our earthly civilizations had as yet produced even so much as a Zeppelin, then it follows that they must be the product of some extra-terrestrial civilization.

Are we being watched over as though we were cattle, owned by superior beings who live beyond this earth? Systematized scientists would willingly guffaw or smile at this “imaginative” assumption, but such facial calisthenics go no farther toward solving the problem than the lowering of cattle tends to free them from bondage.

Man's greatest psychological weakness is that he attempts to reduce the Unknown to his own

level of understanding—if only for the sake of his own egotism and prestige, or for the sake of orthodox System—rather than try to raise his own understanding to such a level that it encompasses the Unknown.

This writer's sister-in-law was in Honolulu at the time of the Pearl Harbor attack. She was driving her car to a filling station when the attack occurred. A Japanese plane zoomed low over her head, and her daughter, seated beside her, remarked upon the Japanese markings which they could both plainly see on the wings. “Strange,” said my sister-in-law, “that the government would go to such extremes of realism in their practice maneuvers.”

She could not conceive of the reality behind what her own eyes had beheld. She, like most human beings, automatically placed the phenomenon in a category which lay within the scope of her understanding.

When Galileo insisted that the Earth revolved about the sun he was persecuted for his trouble, because a non-stationary Earth did not conform to the long established (Aristotelean and ecclesiastic) System of things.

When Louis Pasteur spoke of micro-organisms and propounded his germ-theory of disease, orthodox science, which represented the current System of his time, wished to ostracize him.

Now we have seen flying discs. Somebody in Seattle, in keeping with the darkest of mediaeval traditions, gained popularity in the press by asserting that they were nothing but the aluminum

seals out of beer bottle caps. Then we are to believe that the aluminum seals out of beer bottle caps: 1. Travel in formation; 2. May be seen in almost every state of the Union and parts of Canada (not to mention one press report from Peru); 3. Travel at changing velocities, and *against* the wind!

Let us credit ourselves with more intelligence. Life is real and life is earnest—not a soap opera. A serious mystery has been widely observed. Let us not distort the evidence to fit a *System* or to save our vanity. Remember that the meek shall inherit the Earth, and this has been borne out in the fact that the humblest members of our civilization have always contributed the greatest values while those quick to laugh at an original thought or unusual insight into the Unknown have always been the quickest to seize upon the benefits which the humble and open of heart and mind have offered them even while gasping in the death throes of martyrdom. An idiot can laugh and guffaw and snicker. It takes a man of wisdom to think boldly and originally. So let us not tend toward social idiocy. Let us leave our world series and our juke boxes for a moment and take advantage of one of the greatest gifts of creation—the human mind. Let us *think*. (Lest someone start doing it *for* us!) Let us examine the evidence without being influenced by what the discs “ought” to be, but guided by the thought that science, while doing the best job it can, is still greatly handicapped before the awful immensity of the Unknown, and that there are many things above our heads which are certainly beyond our full understanding today.

CHARLES FORT repeatedly proves that astronomers and other authorities on physical phenomena beyond this planet are very much like the astrologers as described by Lord Bacon when he “pointed out that the astrologers had squirmed into prestige and emolument by shooting at marks, disregarding their misses, and recording their hits with unseemly advertisement.” (*New Lands*.) (Still, one day we may learn that the astrologers also have a leg to stand on, when orthodox science learns more about the interrelationship of gravitation and electromagnetism, and especially about extra-terrestrial radiations and their periodic effect on the controlling physiological factors of heredity.)

Many astronomers claimed the discovery of the planet Neptune to be a triumph of mathematical deduction, but Fort patiently points out the true facts of the case:

1. According to Leverrier, there was *one* planet external to Uranus.

2. According to another contemporary astronomer, Hansen, there were *two* planets.

3. According to a third contemporary, Airy, there was *none*.

All three scientists based their predictions upon mathematical deductions.

When Neptune was finally sighted it was found

so far from the position in which Leverrier had predicted it would be that astronomers in the United States refused to accept that the planet had been discovered by means of calculation.

Fort points out: “One planet was found—so calculated Leverrier, in his profound meditations. Suppose two had been found—confirmation of the brilliant computations of Hansen. None—the opinion of the great astronomer, Sir George Airy.” (*New Lands*.)

Up until the accidental discovery of the trans-Neptunian planet, Pluto, by Mr. Tombough, in 1930, on a photographic plate (*not* by exact calculation, although Lowell predicted it would be found), Leverrier's name enjoyed a high place in the history of astronomy, and still does, because he apparently “called his shot” to some reasonable extent. However, now that *two* trans-Uranian planets have been discovered, all the textbooks should be rewritten, giving Leverrier's place to the *great* astronomer, Mr. Hansen, who predicted two planets would be found (though, for all we know, there may be six more).

All this boils down to one point: *Keep your eyes—and your mind—open*. Our politicians, for example, are *not* solving the problems of this world, because the depth and scope of those problems require the insight of men of higher training and a modicum of wisdom. We must not accept in blind faith what all politicians tell us. It is the same with our scientific authorities. We must keep them on their toes by challenging what they say. Let us not munch placidly the lotus blossoms they print in the textbooks. Let us pat them all on the back and give them all the credit and cooperation they deserve, to be sure, but let *THEM* *not* build around our vision the blinding walls of a *System* that will not accept new things if those new things do not *conform*!

Flying discs have just visited our skies. Beware of the definitions of the systematists. One “authority” said it was all the result of hallucinations. We must shout back at this “authority” with the righteous indignation of adults whose intelligence has been grossly insulted. Why should people in thirty-nine or more states suddenly all acquire equivalent hallucinations at the same time? How can an hallucination be *photographed*?

Dear Professor Orthodox: Life is real and life is earnest—even more so than the *System* you go by.

The discs are real and *they* may be earnest. They are not the product of Nature. Intelligent beings made them. If the discs belong to Russia or any other foreign power, we must prepare for an attack. But evidence would seem to point out that the discs are the product of a civilization which produced them centuries ago. As no civilization on Earth has been known to have produced such objects it follows that extra-terrestrial intelligences own them.

For the discs have been seen in past centuries. Just read Charles Fort for the authoritatively recorded *masses* of evidence.

CHARLES FORT points to the Sargasso Sea, that great mass of seaweed and debris in the North Atlantic Ocean, which has been formed largely by the action of ocean currents. In other words, the floating substances in the Sargasso Sea are in the center of a vortex.

Fort then speaks of gravitational currents in outer space. Between the moon and the earth is a neutral, or balanced zone, somewhere, just as there are many neutral zones between other mutually attracting heavenly bodies. Into such neutral zones there may drift huge masses of spacial debris, meteors, cosmic dust, even water moisture in the form of ice. Fort says there is some evidence that these quasi-worlds float away into orbits around the earth, once formed, like a gigantic log raft in a stream, or around other planets, depending on where they were first concentrated. Inasmuch as the nebular hypothesis has achieved general acceptance in orthodoxy, Fort's hypothesis dealing with this coagulation of cosmic dust and debris in the neutral gravity zones should meet with equal acceptance. Where two whirlpools, currents, or vortices impinge upon one another, eddies are often formed. Suns have been formed by cosmic matter being drawn into huge electromagnetic vortices, and as the material captured gravitated toward the core of the vortex it traveled faster and in closer quarters. The resultant friction caused heat great enough to disrupt atoms and start the chain of atomic disintegration that is a sun's source of energy. Now it may be just as possible that some of these vortices which capture cosmic matter are not as powerful or energetic and therefore the central drifting material is never condensed sufficiently nor moved swiftly enough to create either fusion heat or atomic disintegration. Hence, amorphous dark bodies, loosely hung together—spacial Sargassos. In regard to unknown, amorphous earth satellites, the sun has been repeatedly blotted out (Fort carefully points out specific instances) by something not accepted as being an eclipse. Fort then goes on to say that the orbits of these Super Sargassos sometimes come so close to earth that an interplay of gravitational attraction occurs. Among many instances he tells of bodies bursting out of graves in a cemetery (Riobamba, Brazil) and flying eight hundred or so feet into the air. Ice blocks have fallen from clear skies, also pebbles have descended inside of hailstones. An engineer friend of the writer related a relatively recent experience in the jungles of eastern Bolivia in which dangerously large rocks rained out of a starlit sky. Earthquakes have occurred in unusual places (from the standpoint of seismology). Our atmosphere has been disturbed violently by such proximity of extra-terrestrial bodies. Fort then gives case after case of strange appearances in earthly skies of flying saucers, lights, even —Zepelin-like structures, long before we knew about the aeroplane.

After reading Fort, then one begins to wonder.

Consider, for example, the bad storms in the middle eastern part of the United States in the middle and latter part of June, 1947, which this writer personally witnessed. From St. Louis to the Twin Cities and beyond—pressure areas, strange, upside down clouds (photographed and published in the newspapers), cyclones and electrical storms. Highest Mississippi flood level in 103 years. An earthquake in St. Louis. *Pebbles* broke windows in St. Paul during a hailstorm. And contemporaneous with all this—flying discs.

Fort wonders if extra-terrestrial visitors do not camp on these Super Sargassos and watch us. When such masses approach us more closely the watchers apparently fly into earthly skies to look us over, then go back quickly to their sky islands. Fort also records instances in which reputable astronomers have observed lights and searchlights, stationary and moving, on the dark portion of the moon. This writer once clearly observed in his four-inch Newtonian telescope three symmetrical, circular bodies fly in formation across a field of vision that covered an area of the moon's surface the diameter of which could not have been less than five hundred miles. These objects traversed that field of vision in approximately three seconds. They were flying in perfect formation. All three were exactly the same size. Such symmetry in Nature would be rarer than space ships. This observation was made eighteen years ago and never forgotten.

A question now arises: But this time there were too many flying discs. This was not like anything ever seen before.

Answer: We're liable to see a great many things soon in earthly skies that our human race does not consciously recall having seen before. Consider our startling advancement of the past fifty years. Since previous flying disc visitations (some were recorded in the 19th century) we have even shot off a few atomic bombs.

Atomic power! Somebody is playing with the building blocks of the Universe.

An alarm bell rings in outer space.

Earth has come of age! Earth has grown dangerous! Terrestrial men now have one of the keys to interplanetary navigation. We cannot let them come nosing out here into our territory!

So—special investigation by extra-terrestrials. The discs are nosing about, friends. Maybe this is all nonsense, but—think it over. The writer is of the opinion that an alarm bell had better ring in the cranial vacuæ of some authorities' heads.

Remember: Beware of the systematists!

It would actually be good for this world to be presented with proof of the existence of extra-terrestrial beings, whether they be friends or foes. Because then perhaps men would cease regarding each other as Russians, Americans, Englishmen or Frenchmen, but would recognize the universality of Man. All men would simply call themselves Terrestrials and would unite against the dangers of the great Unknown. . . .

OPERATION EXTERMINATOR

By H. C. GOBLE

ABOUT a year ago my first article on super-sonics was published in this magazine. It is only human to want to say, "I told you so," as developments I mentioned at that time are now being brought to public attention thru newspaper articles.

Latest of these is the published reports on the Navy experiments with "death-sound" which so far has resulted in the extinction of several innocent rats and mice. Sonic death is not new, but the naval application of the "ultrasonicator," a very compact unit for supersound production puts sonic death in the practical class.

Several deaths occurred during the war, at experimental trials of a huge amplifier. The deaths were accidental and consisted of several pigeons and small birds, and one researcher who got in the way of the sound beam. But the apparatus that accomplished this was crude and clumsy compared to the "ultrasonicator" and its military adaptation. The outfit that did the killing during the war went back to some first principles and amplified its sound with compressed air chambers, pressure being maintained by a huge diesel compressor. For this reason it was too heavy, slow and limited for military purposes.

Nevertheless it killed within its range. Now the naval version, a little bigger than a steamer trunk has done the job positively and instantly.

There is a very disturbing fact, which I would like to clarify. This is the fact that the pioneer in much of this "death-sound" work, has not once been mentioned in reports on later developments.

I refer to Professor Mautner, who came to this country in 1938 as a refugee, and set up a small and highly private laboratory at Jervis Bay, New York. As far back as 1942 his work with sound was several years ahead of contemporary developments, and he was the subject of an article in Coronet Magazine. Yet no article on sound in the last year has even troubled to mention his name. Perhaps there is no suppression, there may be a logical explanation of the omission of his name from all credits on supersonic work. But I would rest much easier if I knew he was still busy in his little laboratory raising hypersonic fevers in mice and making goldfish bowls disappear. Certainly any writer who investigates super-sonics must know of the mysterious Professor. Yet no one mentions him anymore. (Deros at work?)

The only comment on "Death-sound" to originate from the scientists so far, is that it looks like it might be a method of pest-control and a good way to mow lawns. What pests are to be controlled and who is going to be mowed down is anyone's guess.

The biggest stopper in "Operation Extermina-

tor" has been the fact that pests die at different sonic frequencies. This includes rats, mice . . . and termites that bore from within. A frequency that will bump off a mouse may bounce off from one of Uncle Joe's boys and just sicken him a bit. On the other hand a frequency that will knock off one of the new order may leave a mouse unscathed and kill every house-cat in the neighborhood. The differential between the cycle rate needed to kill one animal may be several million cycles removed from that needed to kill another.

Of course this issue is confused by several factors. For instance sound of sufficient power will kill in any range, sub-sonic, sonic or super-sonic, given time enough. Tie a man down close to a large set of church bells in constant operation and his ear drums will burst and he will hemorrhage thru the nostrils from the "shock-pressure" of the half-wave creating an alternate high-pressure and low-pressure area. In the case of church bells and low notes on an organ that length of the half-wave is very great, and during the pressure half, air-compression occurs for several feet in front of the advancing wave. At the half-cycle this pressure is replaced by a vacuum equally as great in length.

To this basic killing effect, high-sonic adds two more factors . . . speed of percussion and resonance. To the percussive effects of church-bells or low organ notes the high cycle frequencies add a hammering effect which disrupts living cells internally . . . they literally burst from being unable to withstand an alternate high-pressure and low-pressure area being created around them several million times a second.

A secondary effect of this is heat. This is probably due to a thermodynamic reaction from the alternation of compression and expansion, but whatever the cause, it engenders an instantaneous fever in an animal subjected to a high-sound barrage. It is a question as to whether the fever or ruptured cells and blood vessels produce death first, but between the two death from high-sound is certain. Animals killed by high-sound manifest both conditions. In higher organisms a mental and nervous effect is added to all others. It takes the form of gloom, intense depression, or insanity . . . or as one Professor put it, "A sudden and passionate desire to get out of the room!" A kindred effect is nausea.

THE FINAL and least understood effect on organic matter is resonance. It has been stated that at sufficient amplitude and given sufficient time a sound wave of any frequency will kill. But at the resonant frequency of a living thing, be it an individual cell or a whole

living being, the subject will set up a vibratory rate of its own which strengthens and reinforces the impinging sound-waves resulting in a shattering of the object into small pieces. Resonance on inorganic solids is usually found in the lower sound ranges, toward sub-sonic rather than supersonic. The Walls of Jericho, and the huge-turbine in a power-house will both have a critical frequency in the lower cycle ranges, apparently due to mass. A power-house turbine, when being brought up to speed, must be hurried past the range of 1400-1600 rpm, for at this point on a large turbine, it hits a resonance frequency and if left there long would shake itself apart. The reinforcing notes which produce this result are at a very low pitch.

The resonance point varies with material and with mass . . . just as a long piano string responds to low tones, and a short piano string to high tones. Organic material is so springy and flexible that it is in the higher ranges of sound that the resonant frequency is found . . . where the hammering of the sound waves produces a nearly constant push that has the effect of hardening the cellular material to act as a sounding board. Try to get sympathetic vibration from a bowl of mush and you will understand the comparison. But harden that mush till it is the consistency of concrete and you can shatter it. High sound acts as a hardener on a soft material . . . and having super-compressed it can then set it swinging at resonance in order to destroy itself from within.

Only in a sonic instrument capable of delicate tuning could one effectively find the resonant point of all different types of living matter. And

since tuned sound is impractical much over 25,000 cycles per second (where a diaphragm loud speaker quits working) only the hit or miss method of precutting a crystal to vibrate at a certain frequency for sound production has been possible for high-sonic production. Ten frequencies call for ten different crystals all costly and delicate to prepare. Yet you have a sonic range of multiples, overtones, harmonics fractions of tones, etc., totalling billions between a bottom of 1 wave length per second and the present top of probably around 3,000,000.

As with all knowledge, the most interesting stuff to play with is the hardest to get at. And the deadliest area of the sonic scale is the hardest to produce, which is as it should be. Were this not so, the guy next door could kill you by turning on his radio full-blast, and a policeman's whistle could give you artificial leukemia. It is true radio has produced a lot of high-blood pressure, and a policeman's whistle has often caused heart failure, but these are purely subjective effects.

Rest assured that sonics will be used for much more than to mow lawns and cut mice down in their prime. Get set now, to buy a supersonic lawnmower with crystals pre-cut to kill quack-grass, saw-grass or dandelions. At present rates it will cost you about three thousand bucks with four crystals thrown in. One of these crystals will resonate to kill bill-collectors and the neighbor's chickens, and you can hook it up to your radio so it will eliminate a whole room of unwelcome guests while they are listening to Bing Crosby.

THE END

SPIRIT OF THE SERPENT GOD

By CHIEF SEQUOYAH

SOMEWHERE in the mountains of Oregon there is a hidden cave with a small stream flowing from its mouth. Within the cave lies a vast hoard of gold and jewelry surrounded by the crumbling bones of an ancient tribe of Indians. But watching over both, guarding them against theft by white man and hostile Indian alike, hovers the terrible spirit of the great serpent. He has already wreaked death upon intruders. Beware, oh greedy treasure seekers, lest you rouse the terrible spirit of the serpent god . . .

My own father told me this story, and his father told him, and for uncounted generations it has been a legend of our tribe which lived along the coastline of Oregon and northern California. My father was a medicine man and he knew the ancient legends well.

White people today have been taught to regard the serpent as the Devil himself, or at any rate his

chief emissary on earth. It was different with our tribe. We had many gods and devils, but the most important and powerful of all was the serpent god. To my people in the old days he was not the spirit of evil but of good. They looked upon him especially as the protector of the dead. No man, no treasure, no seed was buried in the ground without the serpent god being called upon to guard it.

If a married man died, and he was a member of the chief's family or the medicine man's family, his widow was required to visit his burial place at the first full moon of every new year for five years. There she must cut her wrist and let her blood run upon the grave to give the serpent god strength to guard over the spirit on its way to the Happy Hunting Ground. Not until she had performed this rite for five years was the widow allowed to take another husband.

Here was the reasoning of our tribe: What could be more fitting to guard those things buried in the ground than the serpent which also lives under the ground? The great serpent was the god of all the minerals of the earth and of all the prized treasures my people placed under the earth for him to guard. The Indians of the coast were great gold miners and the treasures they entrusted to the keeping of the serpent god when they themselves were laid to rest were fabulous.

Now in the east, far east of the mountains in the great plains, there was an Indian chieftain named Blue Eagle who had violated the sacred laws of his tribe. They did not kill Blue Eagle, because the tribe did not believe in the death penalty. Instead they banished him and all his belongings and his family forever from the plains. Westward they went, over the plains, the deserts, the mountains, and ultimately the clan came to the Oregon shore. Here they settled and after hundreds of years they became a great tribe. They prospered and mined gold and made golden ornaments and vessels of shining yellow metal.

But the curse of the first Chief Blue Eagle's evil deeds came at last to rest upon his children. An epidemic of disease hit the tribe at the height of its strength. Enemy tribes they could fight, and the strong wild beasts of the mountains, but they could not fight this sickness. They died like mayflies in the early spring, men and women and children. They fell so fast that there were not enough well men and women to bury the dead. How could their spirits and their precious belongings be committed to the care of the serpent god if graves could not be dug for them?

The medicine man called a last council of all the men in the tribe who could summon strength to attend. "We are doomed," he told them. "The spirits of evil who roam the earth have fixed their eyes upon our spirits and our possessions. We must entrust them to the care of the serpent god."

Since they believed they had no hope of life, they decided that all they could do would be to protect themselves in death. They gathered their riches and precious belongings and their kinfolk and held sacred rites before the mouth of a cave in the mountainside. In the ceremony, the medicine men instructed the serpent to guard over the cave. Then they entered the cave with their belongings, and as each of them died in the cave, the spirit of the dead brave would enter into the serpent so that he would become the stronger to guard it. As a final protection, a landslide was started which closed the cave for hundreds of years.

A special curse was placed against any white man who might find the cave, and the serpent god who guarded it was enjoined to protect it especially against men of white skin. If a white man were to enter the cave, he must die by the strength of the great serpent. "No other man but a Red Man, and one with the heart of the Red Man, can use the contents and secrets of the cave, and then

only for the benefit of the Red Man"—so ran the injunction of the serpent god. . . .

This was the legend. Now what has happened to the cave and its contents?

I have heard many stories of people finding the cave and never having been seen since. I have tried to trace many of these stories down to find out what truth there may be to them and to the curse of the great serpent. I have not been able to verify any of these stories—except one.

In the early days of the gold rush, three prospectors started north from California to explore the mountains of Southern Oregon. They came in with pack mules and mining equipment, provisioned for a long stay. They panned numerous streams on their way, searching for the precious yellow color of gold. They found it one day in a small creek running around the base of a mountain. Up stream and down stream they panned, searching for concentrations of the yellow stuff, but they found very little except at the mouth of a tiny stream which came into the creek out of a cave in the mountain.

These men were Peter Jackson, an old-time mountain man; Mike Burns, who spoke in a Scottish burr so rough it had knobs on it, and Jed O'Hara, part Spanish, part Irish, and a host of other mixtures. Jackson was a cold, hard character, experienced in the wilderness and not caring a damn for Indian or grizzly bear. Burns was easy-going but stubborn once he got on the trail of something. O'Hara apparently was a carefree, hard-working man when the mood was on him, a great whiskey drinker if there was any whiskey to be had, and undoubtedly the most emotional of the trio. He was the only one who could rightly be held to be a superstitious man, and as it turned out this characteristic was to save his life—what was left of it, that is.

Every evidence seemed to point to the fact that the tiny stream issuing from the cave mouth was the source of the color. Considering that fact, it is an odd thing that the three prospectors did not immediately begin to explore the cave. Instead they gave the larger creek a thorough going over, and even explored streams in neighboring valleys from their main camp near the cave. In view of what happened later, it is probable that O'Hara dissuaded his two companions from exploring the cave to any depth until it became evident that if they were to find any gold at all it would have to be within the cave.

As they sat around their campfire at dusk, they could see the mouth of the cave beckoning to them with its promise of gold, and yet at the same time coldly warning them to stay away. As darkness fell it might have looked like the black pit of hell itself to the superstitious Jed O'Hara, and we can imagine him staring at it until it became indistinguishable against the black cloak of night. Exactly why he was so reluctant to enter the cave we cannot say. It may have been the innate superstitiousness of his nature or it may have been

that with his part Mexican-Spanish origins he understood enough of the Indian lingo to have heard some legend of the lost tribe of Chief Blue Eagle and of their guardian great serpent. But the decision had been made. They would explore the cave.

It may have been after troubled dreams that the trio awoke to the greatest day of their lives. They ate their broiled venison for breakfast in silence and after pipes they prepared pine torches and were ready for their trip. At the mouth of the cave they built a large fire, hoping to see it glimmering as a guide from the dark interior. The entrance was very narrow at its lower level, and nearly blocked by a huge boulder around which the stream had eroded a channel just wide enough for them to squeeze by one at a time.

The passage continued narrow for several hundred feet. Jackson, the largest of the three, was in the lead, with Burns following close behind and O'Hara bringing up a somewhat reluctant rear. They had proceeded about 500 yards when they heard a loud hissing sound. They halted abruptly. Jackson started to say something when he felt soft wings brush by him and Burns chimed in with the reassuring words that it was just a bat. They moved ahead, always more slowly, held back by a growing dread of the unknown. It is hard to see ahead very far with the aid of a pine torch, even when it is held high above the head. The holder is illuminated far better than anything he tries to illuminate; he is, in short, a target.

Realizing this in the stygian blackness of the high-vaulted cavern, the three continued their ever more-reluctant advance. And then Jackson screamed in mortal fear. Almost instantly Burns too began to scream hoarsely. In the light of their falling torches, O'Hara saw that the two men ahead had turned to run. He also saw what they were fleeing—a huge coiling serpent with eyes glowing red in the reflected torch light, jaws agape. The fearful vision seemed to freeze O'Hara's brain with terror but his feet grew wings.

One evening, perhaps three months later, the prospectors in a mining camp were on their last round of drinks when a fantastic creature stumbled into the saloon. His appearance was enough to make even these rugged miners halt the glass on its way to their lips. His matted filthy beard was long, his eyes sunken, his cheeks the cheeks of a starving man. He was nearly naked, his clothes ripped off or worn off by the clawing branches and unfriendly rocks of Southern Oregon's mountains. This was what was left of Jed O'Hara.

It was possible to nurse his body back into a

semblance of health, his mind never. When he was able to force words where only gibberish had come, and eventually to link words into rare sentences, there gradually emerged, piece by piece over the months, a story so obviously fantastic that the prospectors shook their heads and said that Jed O'Hara would never be the same again.

As for his story, prospectors knew better than to believe a madman's babblings about a giant snake as large around as a hogshead and as long as a pack rope. But on the other hand, there might be something to his confused tale (prospectors being what they are) about an ancient Indian treasure in a cave. Once several of them organized an expedition around poor old Jed and tried to find his cave. They had no luck with it.

People would have forgotten the story of Jed O'Hara and his lost partners and his snake if two Indian hunters hadn't stumbled onto an old camp in the mountains 40 years later. There were some rusty guns, a couple of old cast iron pots, and the rotted remnants of other paraphernalia which suggested that their owners had left in a hurry. And nearby there was a cave, with a tiny stream emerging from its mouth. The Indians decided to explore the cave. To their horror they found the bones of two men a short way inside. They did not go further.

When they told their story on the outside, a search party was formed to investigate the mystery. The Indians guided the party to the cave and its grisly remains. The remains of the hunting knives, a belt buckle and a few coins indicated that there were the bones of white men. But what were they doing here, and what had killed them? A rock fall had blocked off the cave so it would be hard to penetrate it much beyond the site where the two skeletons lay. But it did not seem in any way responsible for their deaths. A further mystery appeared when the bones were carried out of the cave. The ribs and upper spinal columns seemed literally pulverised by some mighty crushing force, as a vise. But no satisfactory answer was ever found by the white men. The bones were buried near the old camp site and for many years the Indians avoided the place.


Now the cave is lost again, perhaps covered by the heavy undergrowth in the hidden mountains, perhaps by a landslide. The Indian hunters who discovered it have long since gone to the Happy Hunting Ground. But, with the help of the Spirit of my father and the wishes of the Serpent God, I hope some day to rediscover it and put its riches to the use of my people.

THE END

COMING SOON — "TITAN'S DAUGHTER"

By RICHARD S. SHAVER

BOOK-LENGTH SEQUEL TO "GODS OF VENUS"



The CLUB HOUSE

Where science fiction fan clubs get together.

Conducted by ROG PHILLIPS

THE various fan groups are getting their publications in gradually, and we hope soon to have them all available to you readers. The nicest thing about conducting this department is the fact that I get a copy of each of the fanzines to read. I, like many of you, have known in a vague way that fandom exists. It was only when I actually went into the thing—subscribed to a couple of fanzines, that I really knew what a dynamic, alive group fandom is. Those of you who are not in fandom in some way are much like the wallflowers at a dance. You may be enjoying the dance music (in this case the prozines). You might even be getting fun watching the dancers (the fans). But unless you get on the floor and dance you aren't getting all you should out of science fiction and fantasy.

I've been bitten by the bug myself now. In the February *SPACEWARP* is a silly contribution by me. Also in the January *DREAM QUEST* is an article by me entitled "Where To, Science Fiction?" These make me eligible for membership in FAPA (Fantasy Amateur Press Association), so on a recent trip to Los Angeles I joined FAPA! Sort of in honor of the occasion five of us FAPA's composed a one-shot fanzine called *SOIPDAL-GEIF*.

The title was obtained by stabbing a sharp pencil at random in a newspaper and taking the letters stabbed. Luckily they formed a pronounceable word. I'm thinking now of forming a club devoted to finding a meaning for the word. It's too good a word not to have a meaning. The five of us, Charles Burbee of Los Angeles, Don Wilson and Howard Miller of Banning, Cal., who publish *DREAM QUEST*, Rex Ward of El Segundo, Cal., who publishes *FANDOM SPEAKS*, and myself, each composed a short bit to fill out the four page *FAPA*zine. It will be distributed in the *FAPA* mailing to members. It was really fun, and my first experience with actual production of a fanzine. Burbee has a very fine mimeograph, run by a motor.

* * *

The sixth World Science-Fiction Convention is to be held in Toronto, Canada, July 3-5 inclusive. It's called the *TORCON*. This convention was voted to be held at Toronto at last year's convention, the *Philcon*, held in Philadelphia.

Ned McKeown, Chairman for the *Torcon*, also corrects my erroneous statement concerning who sponsors these annual conventions. He says, "The sixth World Science-Fiction Convention is, as was the case with all other conventions, sponsored by an entirely independent organization formed for the express purpose of convening the *Torcon*. The *Torcon* Society has no connection with any outside fan club such as *NFFF*, rather, many members of the other clubs are members of the *Torcon* Society. It is supported by the dollar charge for membership and by the receipts from the auction of original illustrations at the Con. Those originals are generously donated by several of the promags."

With New McKeown's letter comes *TORQUE*, the Toronto Convention news sheet, containing the latest reports on the progress of plans for the convention. So far there are sixty-three members of *Torcon*, which means they have that many dollars in their treasury so far to finance the convention. There will of course be many more before the convention.

Those of you who are interested in this can get all the details by writing Ned McKeown at 1398 Mount Pleasant Road, Toronto, Ontario. Be sure and enclose a stamped, self addressed envelope.

From all reports many of you readers are responding to my efforts to interest you in the active side of fandom. As Orphan Annie says, it makes me feel glad all over. I hope you like your first contact with fandom and stay.

VARIANT: The Philadelphia Science Fiction Society has sent me their fanzine to review. If you live in or near Philadelphia why don't you drop over and attend one of their club meetings sometime soon and see if you'd like to join? According to Milton A. Rothman here's what you'll find. It's taken from his article, "Meeting Night" on page 15 of *VARIANT*.

"At the corner of 56th and Pine is discovered a slightly battered mansion with various remarks scrawled in chalk on its walls. A door leads down into a dungeon-like cubicle known as the club-room of the Philadelphia Science Fiction Society, an organization of crackpots who do not have the fare to go to Los Angeles. The walls of this room are covered thickly with gaudy illustrations from sundry magazines. Space ships blasting through the sky and quaint monsters from many planets

meet the eye on every side. Hords of fanatical science fiction fans throng the dimly lit halls, speaking in high-flown language, thinking in abstruse concepts, and tossing off mathematical equations with practiced ease and a ginger ale chaser."

The club fanzine has its 21 pages packed full of entertainment and is a real steal for only a dime. You fans who live in Pa. should consider this fanzine a must. It's issued bi-monthly by Allison Williams, editor, at 122 S. 18th St., Phila. 3, Pa.

Now we come to the current issues of the fanzines that have been reviewed before in this department. Many of you readers are now subscribers to these fanzines. Those of you who aren't, but plan to subscribe to one or more, please remember to enclose a stamp with your subscription so that if no copies are available for new subscribers you can get your money back without unnecessary expense to the editor who is more than likely operating at a loss as it is. Ambition runs away with the fan editor and he generally puts out far more than he should for the money and has to draw on his own spending money. For a specific example, James Taurasi, editor of FANTASY-TIMES, finds that it costs him about five dollars a month more than he takes in to bring out his fanzine.

FANTASY-TIMES: February, is a good example of one very important service fanzines have to offer. Jimmy Taurasi, its editor, reports on an interview with the editors of a prozine that had been accused of cutting reprints of stories. The editor in question explains to him the problems that had to be faced. Mr. Taurasi passes the discussion on to his readers almost verbatim. Such services make for better understanding between fans and publishers. They help the fan to understand publishing a prozine is not as simple as it seems. They help the pro editor to understand the thoughts of the fans. The usual book and prozine reviews, letter column, and a few ads fill out the issue.

SPACEWARP: February, contains a silly bit of foolishness by myself. (Yes, I've fallen for the temptation to see my name in a fanzine or two.) Mathematical paradoxes continue as a regular feature. There are two this time. Such paradoxes may be invented ad infinitum by the simple process of dividing by something whose actual value is zero, or by taking only one answer from a square root. They are always entertaining.

The second instalment of the contest serial, "The Great STF Broadcast," is by Wilkie Conner. If you remember, it was started in the January issue by Bill Groover, associate editor under Arthur Rapp.

There are other short stories. However, the most interesting item is to the report on the newly formed MICHIGAN SCIENCE FICTION SOCIETY. The report deals with the first statewide gathering, held January 30th at the home of Ed

Kuss, 7502 Crixdale, Highland Park, Detroit, Michigan. If you live in Michigan why don't you write to SPACEWARP and ask about the next meeting?

THE GORGON: January issue, maintains its usual high quality. There is a Denver group of fans that hold regular meetings. They are held on Saturday evening. If you live in Denver or near there, contact Stan Mullen and ask about the group. It's called the Colorado Fantasy Society.

In addition there is a short story, "The Shadow Woman", by Shan Nosgorov; a poem, "Storms of Night", by Marijane Nuttall, the famous fan poetess whose poems have appeared in many different fanzines. "The Killer" is a short story by David H. Keller, the great staff writer, appearing in this issue of GORGON.

FANEWS: nos. 338, 339 are in. Dunk has a circulation of 1263 now. His newszine fills the need for news while it is still news in fandom. It is seldom more than one or two sheets, appears when the news warrants it (which is quite often), and not only keeps its readers informed on fan doings, but also on the appearance of new prozines and other things fans are interested in. The official election returns on the NFFF voting for officers appears.

Dunk's pet peeve is book dealers who capitalize on fans by charging outrageous prices for old magazines and books. I back him wholeheartedly on this, but for obvious reasons cannot publish the names of either the good book dealers or the bad ones. Dunk can. So if you want the names of a few dealers you can rely on, write Dunk for no. 339 of FANEWS.

FANTASY ADVERTISER: is back again with the November, 1947 issue. This zine is one of the finest in fandom. Like the Satevepost, etc., the paid advertisements in it pay for the printing and paper, so you get a lot for your money. The ads are all on things fans are interested in, back issue prozines, books, etc. A very interesting article on Lovecraft by Michael Harrison, well illustrated, is the top item in this issue. Willmorth needs more articles for future issues.

I met Gus Willmorth on a recent trip to Los Angeles. We had an interesting talk on fandom and on his fanzine. You may be sure of interesting reading and also the most thorough section of advertising of old prozines and of fantasy books in any fanzine when you subscribe to Fantasy Advertiser.

DREAM QUEST: January. DQ is rapidly becoming one of the best fanzines ever to be put out. Don Wilson and Howard Miller spend most of their spare time on it. They make an excellent team. Don has a gift for writing. Howard will some day be a top flight commercial artist. Both are still in their teens.

No stories this issue. Three articles. One is by Sam Moskowitz, the second by Rex Ward, and the third by Rog Phillips—hey, that's me! Then there's a book review by Henry Elsner, Jr., a poem by Genevieve Stephens, a review of the

current prozines and the usual interesting readers' column. My favorite facet of fandom is readers' columns. When a guy sits down to write a story or article he often becomes stilted. When the same guy writes a letter he is natural and interesting. It's almost the same difference as exists between an unposed and a posed photograph.

There have been many requests for information about fan clubs in various cities. This department is especially interested in encouraging such sf clubs, especially among the teen-agers. They don't have to be exactly clubs, either. No matter what your age, if you would like to contact others interested in science and science fiction in your neck of the woods drop me a line. If I know of such a group I'll let you know. Otherwise if you wish I'll print your name and address so that others in your community that read *Amazing Stories* can contact you themselves. From there on it's your baby.

Jeanette Marie Thomas, 16 years old, 2648, N. Franklin St., Philadelphia 33, Pa., does not want to get into a group of older fans. She is interested in getting a group of teen-agers together; so if you are a teen-ager in Philadelphia and like the idea, get in touch with her.

John E. Blyler, 703-21st St., Altoona, Pa. would also like to get together with local fans. Louis E. Garner, Jr., 310 East Mason Ave., Alexandria, Va., would like to know if there's a fan group there or in Washington, D. C.

DREAM QUEST: 10c, 13/\$1.00; Don Wilson; 495 N. 3rd St., Banning, Cal.

FANDOM SPEAKS: 10c, 12/\$1.00; Rex Ward; 428 Main St.; El Segundo, Cal.

FANEWS: 3c per sheet, 40/\$1.00; Walter Dunkelburger; 1443 Fourth Ave. S.; Fargo, N. D.

FANTASY ADVERTISER: 10c, 50c/yr.; Gus Willmorth; 643 S. Bixel St., Los Angeles 14, Cal.

FANTASY COMMENTATOR: 25c, 5/\$1.00; A. Langley Searles; 19A E. 235th St., N. Y. City 66.

FANTASY-TIMES: 10c, 12/\$1.00; James V. Taurasi; 101-02 Northern Blvd., Corona, N. Y.

GORGON: 15c, 75c/yr. bi-monthly; Stanley Mullen; 4936 Grove St., Denver 11, Col.

IF!: 5c, 6/25c; Conrad A. Pederson; 705 W. Kelso St., Inglewood, Cal.

KAY MAR TRADER: 5c; K. Martin Carlson; 1028 Third Ave., Moorhead, Minn.

LUNACY: 5c; George Caldwell; 1115 San Anselmo Ave., San Anselmo, Cal.

NECROMANCER: 10, 6/50c; David A. MacInnes; Box 1367, Memphis 1, Tenn.

SINE NOMEN: 5c; John Van Couvering; 902 N. Downey Ave., Downey, Cal.

SNIX: 10, 4/25c; Walter A. Coslet; Box 6, Helena, Mont.

SPACEWARP: 10c, 12/\$1.00; Arthur H. Rapp; 2120 Bay St., Saginaw, Mich.

SPACETEER: 10c, 6/50c; Lin Carter; 865 20th Ave. S., St. Petersburg, Fla.

VARIANT: 10c, 12/\$1.00; official magazine of the Philadelphia Science Fiction Society. Allison Williams, 122 S. 18th St., Phila. 3, Pa.

WILD HAIR: 10c 2/15c; 1057 S. Normandie Ave., Los Angeles 6, Cal.

BURROUGHS BULLETIN: free; Vernell and Dorothea Coriell; Box 78, Manito, Ill.

LOKI: free; Gerry de la Ree; 9 Bogart Pl.; Westwood, N. J.

(Notice to fan editors: Space permitting, this list will appear regularly. To get on it you must send your fan publication for review purposes. If you quit publishing please notify us so we can drop your zine from the list.)



BLACK RAIN



SHORTLY before the close of the eighteenth century, Ireland and parts of Europe were the scenes of many freak phenomena of nature. Eire especially was visited by this quirk, now known in history as "The Black Rain."

Late in June toward the close of the century the Irish farmer noticed a quick darkening of the sky, but to his matured eye he presumed it to be merely another summer storm. With each falling drop, however, his anxiety increased and not knowing what it was, sought shelter. Others in the locality of the storm experienced the same occurrence. Taking note of the black drops falling out of the sky, hysteria became more and more prevalent among the townsfolk. Seeking advice from their town rulers they were told to stay indoors till some plan could be established to cope with the

situation. Many theories were advanced, some reasonable and others the result of fear. Among these was the old cry of plague. Another was that God was taking his justice on the people for their sins. It was not until a scientific explanation of the black coating covering the land that the people sighed in relief.

The rain is caused by the accumulation of dust resulting from city fires, together with remains of forest fires. Occasionally some fungus such as causing mildew and rust are collected in the rain. These are carried by the wind and subsequently deposited with the falling rain. Should the rain contain the spores of the fungi mentioned they take root in the ground and spread, and thus give the appearance of a black coat covering the area.

George N. Glassingame

REMEMBER CASSANDRA

By H. C. GOBLE

SCIENTISTS and laymen who sound alarms of doom today are in the position of Cassandra who was cursed by the Gods. She could prophesy the future accurately but it was her curse that no one would believe her until it was too late . . . as happened with the Trojan Horse. Cassandra prophesied what would happen if the Trojans took the horse within the walls of the city . . . and they gave her the horse-laugh.

Never in all history have the portents of world doom been so noticeable. Even without the atomic bomb, or interplanetary attack putting the final period to the sentence, the disruption of natural balances started at the beginning of the industrial age will reach its fruition probably in the life-time of a child born today, and probably sooner.

The first stage was the wholesale rape of topsoil and timber possible with power-driven machinery. Here are irreplaceable resources ruined, with only a minor attempt to provide synthetic substitutes or halt the drain in some wholesale scientific fashion. How many years will it be before hydroponics and government tree planting projects can correct this evil, even if a national program was started today? That desert which the Nile and Euphrates valleys are today was once a green and fertile spot. But at that time there was a world of untouched land for the despoilers to move to once their own soil was ruined. Not so today.

Daily the land grows balder, washes to the sea, as millions of feet of timber are carelessly wasted without replanting, and with no coordinated attempt to provide a synthetic substitute.

Daily the mines approach closer to exhaustion, the petroleum resources to extinction.

Those were the first unbalances. The Dust Bowl and the low grade ore left in the Mesabi iron mines are mute reminders of what can happen. Destructive floods always follow also, when lands are stripped of trees and grass, and water retaining vegetation. Watch flood damage increase each year, in spite of well-meant governmental efforts at control. Each flood each year takes millions of tons of topsoil into the ocean, never to be reclaimed. Contour plowing has come too little and too late.

We will ignore the practical extinction of the buffalo, the egret, the passenger pigeon, the manatee and the alligator, plus a hundred lesser known animals who succumbed in the past 100 years to repeating weapons such as the world never knew before the Machine Age.

Let's look at people. Think there's hope for the future? Yearly some 500,000 minds, many of

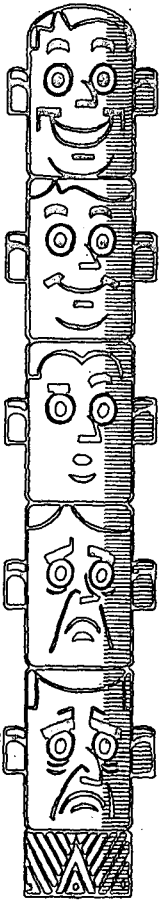
them excellent, are committed to booby hatches in this nation. This number is growing by leaps and bounds . . . and the neurotics still at large are rapidly making the world into one vast madhouse. How many of the minds committed are actually unbalanced, and how many are merely at variance with a ridiculous norm established by the greatest mass propaganda machinery in the world . . . the modern press, radio and movie.

How many of these minds are minds that have cracked under the sheer muddle of our industrial civilization, mainly the complexities of economics and the schizophrenic variation between our moral code and what our instincts and racial memories tell us to do. Apologists will tell you that the booby-hatches are full because these materialistic experts know more about mental diseases than previously and thus catch many cases that would otherwise be loose. This merely begs the issue of why an increasing number of people should jump the blue-wall every year in a supposedly stable and rewarding civilization. A world in such a state of hypertension as this one, cannot long exist without blowing its collective top.

Daily our national metabolism declines. It is truly a miracle that the average life-span has been extended. This has been done by building up a top-heavy medical maintenance machine that spends millions of bucks to keep human beings patched up that wouldn't have needed patching in the first place if they'd lived right mentally and physically.

It is to be expected, they say, that in a civilized people, hair and teeth will tend to become superficial, muscles weaker and digestive system more compact. But this is supposed to be an evolutionary trend not a jump into the thing with both feet, as civilized people have done in the last 100 years. This is a sudden matter which began with the use of power driven tools, processed foods and overheated apartments and homes. It has nothing to do with any orderly progression upward from beast to angel, it is a superficial degeneration. Nature has given us no assurance that overnight we might not have to go back to a hand-to-hand struggle with raw nature. Will teeth, unused to masticating rough food chew adequately enough for a similarly weakened digestive system to handle the output. Will the human system, weakened by steam heat, under-exercise, worry-produced neuroses, alcohol and Simmons mattresses, stand up against the beating of nature's wilderness . . . if we should have to go back.

(Continued on page 166)



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(Continued from page 164)

DAILY the automobile weakens our muscles, our morals and our spiritual instincts. Is one voice raised to say that this toy should be completely taken out of any except professional hands? Is anyone trying to devise a sensible substitute which will not contribute to the slow death of our planet with carbon monoxide fumes . . . and what happens to the inventor that does hit on something in that line? The automobile, with its dependence on a huge supply of specialized fuel transported from distant refineries, is the weakest point of our entire civilization in a crisis. Daily we plan our economy on the childish assumption that fuel for automobiles will always be available and easily distributed. We laugh at the occasional roadside pedestrian, secure in our knowledge that we will always possess our automobile and the fuel to operate and the complex facilities to maintain it. We are sure that a forced march of forty miles a day in search of food, shelter or escape will never be forced on us. (Did I hear someone wondering about the present fuel-oil and gasoline shortage?)

Our homes and communities are the same interdependent madhouse. A powerline or phone line goes down, and blocks of a great city are without heat, cooking facilities, refrigeration, light or communication. Oh yes, it is true it rarely happens . . . only in unusual blizzards or windstorms . . . and usually it is soon rectified. But this is not a time of crisis. What if the powerhouse and the phone exchange go out, instead of just the lines. A thousand cities in Europe can answer that question . . . and their dependence on electric power and telephone service is only a fraction of ours.

Now on top of the rest of the slow breakdown, there are signs that the triggering of the cosmos at Los Alamos, Bikini, Nagasaki and Hiroshima, has begun to get in its licks. It is not possible for the layman to prove that the madhouse of weather conditions loosed this past year throughout the nation is a forerunner of worse to come . . . but it is not unreasonable to speculate that what cosmic rays, tropospheric electricity and solar radiations can do to make weather wacky, could be equally reproduced by radioactive clouds from our new plaything floating around at comparatively close range . . . and possibly chain-reacting at a slow rate to produce a cumulatively worse condition in ensuing years. I know the hurricanes we had in south Florida were out of this world this past fall. One included a lightning storm and five small tornados within its whirling circumference, and another split into two smaller hurricanes, while the last one of the season sprang out of nowhere so fast that we had only two hours' warning . . . not enough time to get up storm shutters. This in spite of the weather bureaus constant reconnaissance covering hundreds of miles in every

direction. And just as the snowfalls in the east have broken all precedented records, our rainfall in South Florida has broken all recorded figures for any previous year, and the warnings are out that we may expect worse in 1948. (Didn't I hear our weatherman last year predicting the beginning of a drought cycle?)

MOST definite symptom of the Rog Phillips theory is the red-tide, which infested the Florida Coast for many months last year. First believed to be caused by a plankton already familiar to local biologists, this gaseous infestation discolored hundreds of square miles of Florida's Coast, killed several million dollars' worth of fish and nauseated bathers with its throat irritating output from one side of the peninsula to the other. Nothing stopped it, until it was ready to dissipate which it finally did in the September hurricane, after ruining the resort business for several coastal communities. And when it was finally gone, the squabbling biologists had still settled absolutely nothing as to what it was, why it was, or what could be done about it.

I do not suggest that the "red-tide" was itself radioactive. I do suggest that it could well have been a mutation of the standard red plankton which has infected this coast in the past, but never before with a complement of poison gas, and never before in such quantities.

And now we come to Virus X, the newest link in the suppressed chain of doom-evidence. First I would point out that "Amazing Stories" published a letter recently which was probably written by one of the earliest sufferers from Virus X. The letter is in A. S. Reader's Column for October 1947. In brief the writer mentions being taken by a sudden group of symptoms while walking on the beach near L. A. in JULY 1946. Now within the last two months Virus X has begun to make headlines from the L. A. area, and has already spread to this sea-coast area in which I live. The pattern of symptoms suggests mild radioactive poisoning in every respect . . . and I think a check-up would reveal . . . as it has here, that victims suddenly smitten had been in contact with the ocean within the previous week.

Note, with an active mind, that Virus X causes a decline in the blood count. Note that its most distinguishing feature is that it strikes the victim like a ton of bricks, at work or at home, without his previously feeling sick. This sudden smiting without previous warning is unprecedented for any known kind of organic virus. One minute the victim is in action and healthy, the next he is smitten by nausea and weakness, the blood-count begins to drop, and the victim is subject to gastrointestinal disturbances. Draw your own conclusions . . . you must, since Virus X is cloaked in the usual mystery that cloaks anything that baffles our stout experts, or is too plain evidence of something they won't admit.

(Concluded on page 171)

BAD SKIN?

Stop Worrying About Pimples,
Blackheads and Other Externally Caused
Skin Troubles

Try Skin Doctor's Amazing
Simple Directions
and Be Thrilled with the Difference—
Often So Much

CLEARER IN JUST ONE SHORT WEEK

SQUEEZING pimples or blackheads to get rid of them is a nasty, messy business—but that isn't the worst of it. Because doing so may also be injurious and leave your skin with unsightly, embarrassing blemishes. There is, now, a much easier, safer, cleaner way to help you rid your face of ugly, offensive, externally caused skin troubles. You merely follow a doctor's simple directions.

Good-Looking Skin Is Not for Women Only

You—yes, you—can have the same healthy, normal complexion free from externally caused skin troubles simply by giving your skin the special care that handsome screen stars give theirs. There's almost nothing to it—it is just about as easy as washing your face. The whole secret consists of washing your face in a way that thoroughly cleanses the pores of every last speck of dirt and grime—something that ordinary cleansing may not do. In fact, examination after examination shows that, usually, it is not a case of "bad skin" so much as a case of incomplete or faulty cleansing. What you should use is a highly concentrated soap like Viderm Skin[®] Cleanser which penetrates the pores and acts as an antiseptic. When followed by a quick application of Viderm Medicated Skin Cream, specks of irritating dirt and grime are quickly washed out; they dissolve and disappear, leaving your skin clean, clear and free of the specks that often bring out pimples, blackheads and other externally-caused skin troubles.

It's Foolish to Take Bad Skin for Granted

It doesn't pay to risk marred skin, blotches, blemishes. Your very success in business, love and social life may depend upon your looks. *Handsome and a good appearance usually start with the condition of your skin.* Nobody likes a skin that looks unhealthy, unclean, abused, and marked with blackheads or pimples. **WOMEN ARE ATTRACTED TO MEN WHO HAVE SMOOTH,**



CLEAR, ROBUST-LOOKING SKIN. Business executives don't choose men who have a poor-looking complexion. Don't take chances with your success in life when this inexpensive Viderm formula may help you.

Don't murder your skin! Here's all you have to do to keep it smooth and clear. Use Viderm Skin Cleanser when you wash your face. Rub the rich lather of this highly-concentrated soap on your face for just a few seconds and then rinse it off. Then apply a little Viderm Medicated Skin Cream and that's all there is to it. Viderm Medicated Skin Cream quickly disappears, leaving your skin nice and smooth. This simple treatment, used after shaving, helps heal tiny nicks and cuts, relieves razor-burn and smarting, besides conditioning your skin.

Give Your Face This Treat for 7 Days

Stop worrying and being embarrassed over what may happen to your skin. Just send for your Viderm Double Treatment this minute, and be confident that you will keep a smooth and clear complexion. Follow the simple directions, written by a doctor, that you will get with your Viderm Double Treatment; then look in your mirror and listen to your friends admire your smooth, clear skin—the kind that women go for.

Just mail your name and address to The New York Skin Laboratory, 206 Division Street, Dept. 446, New York City 2; New York. By return mail you will receive both

of the Viderm formulas, complete with full directions, and packed in a safety-sealed carton. On delivery, pay two dollars plus postage. If you wish, you can save the postage fee by mailing the two dollars with your letter. Then, if you aren't thrilled with results, your money will be cheerfully refunded. Remember that both of the formulas you use have been fully tested and proven, and are reliable for you. If they don't help you, your treatments cost you nothing. After you have received your Viderm, if you have any questions to ask concerning abused skin, just send them in.

DON'T DO THIS!



Don't murder your skin by squeezing it. Skin is delicate. When you break it, you leave yourself wide open to miseries. It's far easier, far safer, to let the Double Viderm treatment help you enjoy a handsome, clear and blemish-free complexion.

PRINT ME A RADIO

By

★ MAXWELL WELLINGTON ★

LOTS of times during the past few years, especially since the end of the war, the editors of *Amazing Stories* have been harping on the "progressive automatization" of industry. That powerful sounding phrase covers a world of magnificent ideas. While it is true all over the world that industry is becoming more and more mechanized, and that almost all tasks done by human hands can be better done by machines, it is particularly true in the United States which is the home of mass-production.

If you had spoken with anyone connected with the radio industry during the past thirty years following the First World War, and had asked him what was the greatest drawback to mass-production radios, he would have answered very succinctly—"wiring."

In building any kind of electronic device, the major drawback to reproducing it rapidly, is the necessity, not for building any of the component parts of the gadget like tubes, condensers, coils, etc. The trouble lies in making hundreds, often thousands, of soldered connections, with wire, solder and soldering irons plus tedious, detailed human labor.

This necessity more than anything else has hampered the radio industry. Previously there was no way to assemble radio receivers, and other electronic gadgets without this sort of thing. Naturally, it is reflected in the price of radios. It takes a lot of man-minutes to make a thousand soldered connections—or even a hundred. With the advent of television with much more intricate circuits, the problem is doubled in complexity.

But there is a revolution afoot in the game. The war, with its introduction of one particular device—the proximity fuse—has changed all this. By the end of the war all the major combatants were building tiny little transmitters and receivers by *printing* them!

In a printed radio circuit, the components are these: a conductor, formerly a comparatively heavy piece of copper wire, now becomes a thin eighth-inch wide strip of silver a few thousandths of an inch thick. It carries as much juice as the wire. A resistor, formerly a pretty good chunk of carbon, now becomes a thin strip of carbon paint. A condenser, previously a bulky cylinder, becomes a number of wafer-thin disks.

TO PREPARE the circuit, a stencil is used. It is placed over a ceramic or plastic plate maybe only a few inches square. Then appropriate paints are sprayed against it. The plate has previously been fitted with suitable lugs, holes, and other

connecting points. After the paints have been sprayed on the plate, it is baked in an oven. Then all that has to be done is to stick in tubes, transformers, etc., which obviously cannot be printed, and the radio is ready to go. In addition to the speed and simplicity with which this may be done, the size is comparatively minute. Thus receivers may be made as big or little bigger than a few tubes in physical size!

When wires have to cross on a printed circuit, there is no problem. The first wire is printed, dried, painted with an insulating paint, and another wire printed across it. There is no contact then between the two wires.

While the art of printing radio circuits is still in its infancy, it is being developed as rapidly as possible. Hundreds of firms as well as government organizations are entering the field. It is going to make the construction of radios a thousand-fold simpler. In fact, portions of the circuits are made to be plugged into sets as radio tubes are. Then, if anything goes wrong with a portion of the set, the defective plug-in is removed, another substituted and the set is then placed in operation without any delay.

In England and in Germany, where many of the original techniques of printing radio sets developed, work is also being done. For example, there is a firm in London which has devised a machine into one end of which is put the necessary materials such as tubes, plates, paint, speakers and so on. At the other end, without the interference of human hands, a finished three or four tube miniature radio emerges. It sounds fantastic but it is true.

And this is just the beginning. It has always been the policy of *Amazing Stories* to point the way which applied science is taking. Robot machines for producing the commodities of modern civilization, no matter how involved, are continually being created.

The time is coming, and it is not too far away, when almost anything that man can make, will be better made automatically. What will this mean to us? It will mean that everyone will be able to have everything that one desires. And, of course, no matter how many machines there are, there will always be the need for men with intelligence and knowledge to design them. Science is never static.

Excuse us a moment, please. Think we ought to go out and have a new car printed up for us! Or maybe we need a new house. Where is that printer's devil? Come here, boy!

THE END



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ARE the tales of strange human powers false? Can the mysterious feats performed by the mystics of the Orient be explained away as only illusions? Is there an intangible bond with the universe beyond which draws mankind on? Does a mighty Cosmic Intelligence from the reaches of space ebb and flow through the deep recesses of the mind, forming a river of wisdom which can carry men and women to the heights of personal achievement?

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MACHINES MAKE MACHINES



By FRANCES YERXA



MACHINE tools are no novelty to the average American. In fact, they are the basis on which the whole of Western civilization is founded. We like to think of the United States as the world center of machine-tool making. While this is true now, it was not so before the Second World War. The Nazis had turned Germany into a huge machine tool factory which made more machine tools, ranging from lathes to the most complex of automatic machines, primarily for producing war materials. Then when we got into the war we turned our energies in that direction.

Because machine tools do not wear out, but only become obsolete, there is a vast quantity of them in the world today, with more and more being made. The amazing thing about machine tools, however, is not their number, but the way in which they work.

The simple lathe as every one knows, invented by the English engineer Maudsley, with screw-cutting attachments, forms the basic element of almost all machine tools. One look into an automobile factory is enough to convince anyone that such machines can do anything.

These machines are becoming more and more complex as thousands of engineers and scientists turn their talents to making them more productive. We are reaching a stage in the time of the world, where raw materials in the form usually of metals, are fed into the maws of machines, from whose ends finished products come out.

Previously, most machine tools were driven by electric motors, and controlled by human operators. This is becoming less so now. The same electric power is employed, but instead of human hands at the guiding controls of the tools, automatic devices, many of them electronic in nature, are applied.

With the aid of electronic controls, the human element is practically eliminated. It is only needed to set up the machine and get it ready to function. The rest is done by maybe as many as a couple of dozen electric motors and a few dozen vacuum tubes in an intricate electrical arrangement. This calls for engineering of the highest order. Fortunately there is no shortage of that skill.

One of the finest examples of these monsters that make our industrial civilization possible, is a machine tool created during the War and designed to machine ships' propellers from huge castings of bronze. Before this machine came into use, the machining of a ship's propeller was an extremely

difficult task. It required repeated tests and long detailed work to build. Weeks were taken, while each non-regular curving surface of the propeller was examined to make sure that it followed its designed contours exactly.

THE machine to eliminate this was constructed in the form of a pantograph! A miniature model of the propeller, constructed exactly to scale, was automatically followed by a tracing arm. This model was one-tenth the size of the casting to be machined. Linked to the tracing arm were the cutting tools, revolving cutters much like those found in almost any milling machine.

The guide-tool was carefully drawn over the miniature model of the prop. As it followed the devious complex surfaces of the model, the cutting tools did the same on the original casting. The linkage between the two, however, was the miracle. It consisted of powerful electric motors, delicate electronic controls and other devices that multiplied the power of the guide tool. The net result was that very rapidly, an entire casting was machined perfectly according to the model held in the number one arm of the machine.

This gigantic monster of engineering was the size of a small house but it could mill out all the propellers necessary for the hundreds of ships that were being built at that time, a previously impossible task.

What are the applications of this to peace-time? Many hundreds of different machines are being constructed today that do practically the same thing on a thousand different products ranging from a simple tube to a complex airplane assembly.

Numbers of authorities have predicted that eventually the world will see complete factories that are totally automatic. Materials will go in one door and come out finished articles the other. This is not a long term affair, either. It is being planned today. The age of the robot is here! The Czech dramatist, Capek, creator of the play, "R.U.R.," may not have been wrong when he predicted a revolt of the robots. Who knows, maybe our factories will take over us!

While at present it is impossible to devise even a parody of a human brain, who can say that it may never be done? It is a far cry from flesh and blood to metal, especially endowed with thinking power, but in this day when science so accelerates, who knows what may eventually come. The brain of the science-fictionists' "spongy platinum" is a potentiality.

REMEMBER CASSANDRA

REMEMBER CASSANDRA

(Concluded from page 166)

Let's sum up briefly, and see what chance we've got if we continue to go ahead as at present.

1. Soil and timber exhaustion (already very acute).
2. Exhaustion of fuel and mined products (rapidly becoming a have-not nation).
3. Overspecialization, too much interdependence (remember the dinosaur).
4. Physical and mental degeneration. (Ask the draft doctors).
5. An added dividend of doom from previous atomic explosions, breaking up the weather cycle, polluting water and air, and creating freak mutations.
6. Of course the final period is the atom bombs to be thrown in the near future by all and sundry.

SCIENCE-FICTIONISTS and those who see the portents would do well *right now* to make plans to set up individual homesteads, isolated from urban centers, with at least one underground concrete walled chamber of refuge. And while the tools of industry are still available, the far-seeing man should begin to stockpile his hideouts with basics enough to last a considerable time . . . canned goods, simple durable clothing, a standby generator for light and power with a plentiful supply of fuel. Actually it would be more sensible to turn back to the basics of wind and water power . . . for the gasoline used in a modern engine will be impossible to obtain, transport and refine if our complex system goes on the blink.

One will need weapons. When civilization breaks down, the man on horseback takes over. There will be looting, hungry mobs, feudal baronies dominated by the strong man who lives thru the crisis, madmen, released convicts, domestic animals turned wild and wild animals emboldened. Don't rely on gunpowder . . . the simple ingredients are too hard to come by. If your life depended on it today, where would you go to dig up sulfur and nitrate to make black powder with? Best train yourself in the use of bow, cross-bow and air-rifle where the ammunition is simple to make and easily retrievable.

In any dependence on machinery, remember, finely tooled replacement parts are going to be a big factor in any machine too complex. For ordinary transportation an electric vehicle is suggested, which may have its batteries recharged by your wind or water power generator.

These preparations may seem laughable now, as you gaze upon our busy cities and our seeming stability. But when you want to laugh, remember the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome . . . and REMEMBER HOW THEY LAUGHED AT CASSANDRA!

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AMAZING STORIES will publish in each issue a selection of letters from readers. Everybody is welcome to contribute. Bouquets and brickbats will have an equal chance. Inter-reader correspondence and controversy will be encouraged through this department. Get in with the gang and have your say.



Address Your Letters to:

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WE'LL KEEP IT UP!

Sirs:

I have just finished reading S. J. Byrne's fine story Prometheus II. Keep up that type of story. I have been reading your magazine since last summer and I have picked out my favorite novels.

They are in the order that I liked them: The Star Kings, The Giants of Mogo, Hidden City, So Shall Ye Reap. Keep up those space stories.

Rog Phillips' new column is swell. Keep it up. When will Rog write another one of his swell stories? If this letter is published I wish to get in contact with some reader who has back issues of AMAZING to sell, since I have missed many good stories.

Louisville is a large city but there are not many SF fans in this section so if anybody wants to begin a correspondence with me I can start one or a hundred since I have much time to write.

I am enclosing some sections from our paper which is very interesting if you are interested in flying discs.

If this letter is published I wish the SF fans in this area to get in touch with me. My number is Highland 5684-W. If there are enough fans in this area I wish to start a club.

Lester Fried,
2050 Midland,
Louisville 4, Ky.

We've got more of the same, Mr. Fried! And we're delighted to know you approve of our new feature. It has made quite a hit. We've got more of Rog Phillips coming up.—Ed.

DATA ON L.A. CAVE

Sirs:

Referring to your article entitled, "Quest of the Lost City," by Sanford M. Cleveland, in the July 1947 issue of AMAZING STORIES Magazine, I am enclosing copies of letters from the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce which might be of interest to you, as they satisfactorily corroborate this article.

Mrs. Florence E. Stoppel,
2933 Irving Park Road,
Chicago 18, Illinois.

LOS ANGELES CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

December 11, 1947

Mrs. Florence E. Stoppel

2933 Irving Park Road

Chicago 18, Illinois

Dear Mrs. Stoppel:

The enclosed letter just received from Lloyd Aldrich, City Engineer of Los Angeles, will answer your inquiry of October 14 regarding the excavations made in 1933-34 on the old Willis property later included in the Banning estate.

Mr. Rex I. McCreary, one of the three men who participated in the project, told me that the county permitted them to dig holes only fifty feet deep, fearing that excavations to a greater depth might cause cave-ins. Finally, the county ordered them to stop digging altogether, so the holes were filled up and the project abandoned.

I was unable to locate either Mr. Martin, or the third man engaged in the project, Mr. Warren G. Shufelt, who had the apparatus used to establish the presence of metals, both having dropped out of sight, apparently. Mr. Shufelt was the one who developed the theory or supposed information regarding the extensive underground chambers but nothing was ever discovered to bear out his beliefs.

It is quite possible, of course, that the supposed labyrinth really exists. But in view of the fact that the overlying area is in the immediate Civic Center area where an important building program is to be carried out including federal, state, county and city buildings, there is little probability of any further excavations.

We regret the delay in replying to your query.

(Signed) Arche M. Dunning,
Publicity Dept.

Lloyd Aldrich,
City Engineer,
City of Los Angeles,
California.

Dept. of
Public Works
Bureau of
Engineering

Date: December 8, 1947

File No.: 70

DISCUSSIONS

Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce
1151 Broadway
Los Angeles 15, California
Subject: Excavation at 518 Hill Street

Attention: Mr. Archie M. Dunning, Publicity Dept.
Gentlemen:

Referring to the letter of Florence E. Stoppel regarding the article concerning caves within the Fort Moore Hill Area, a search of back files of the "Times" reveals the following facts:

February 21, 1933, the County Board of Supervisors approved a contract with Rex I. McCreary, Warren G. Shufelt and Ray Martin to search for buried treasure on the old Willis property on Fort Moore Hill.

Mr. Shufelt had a radio directed apparatus which was purported to be able to locate gold or other precious metals at great depths. The permittees were to bear all expense, leave the property in its original condition, and share 50-50 with the county all treasure discovered.

Excavation started February 28, 1933.

March 4, 1933, the gold finding machine was temporarily set aside in favor of an ancient sheepskin map giving specific instructions.

March 27, 1933, permittees requested extension of time on the permit on the belief that there existed a labyrinth of tunnels embracing 1,900 feet in length with rooms containing 9,000 square feet of floor space with gold vaults in at least 16 places.

April 10, 1933, contract renewed.

January 29, 1934, was the first mention of a lizard people of high intelligence who had built and inhabited the tunnels of 5,000 years ago. One of the 5 shafts was 250 feet deep at this time.

March 5, 1934, the shafts had been filled in, the contract was cancelled, and the Bond for restoration of shafts and improvements cancelled.

Neither gold nor other treasure, if discovered, was ever turned over to the County.

(Signed) LLOYD ALDRICH
City Engineer

Well, there we have the facts in the case. It still remains a story that is unfinished, but the answer seems to lie beneath Los Angeles, and may yet be brought to light!—Ed.

THE INQUISITION

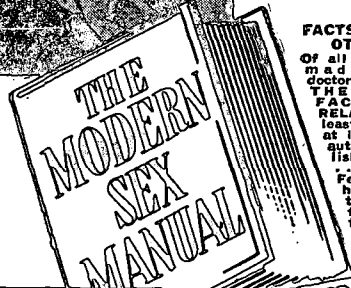
Sirs:

I have been a Shaver fan since "I Remember Lemuria" and I even remember the "racial memory" editorial. My own attitude is one of tongue-in-cheek although some, in fact quite a few, of the things of which he speaks are, in my mind, quite possible. However, I am writing about something else.

I do not know whether it is deliberate (if it is you might as well quit reading this right now) but Mr. Shaver is creating a poor impression by his use of facts about which he never must have checked.



WRITTEN IN
EVERYDAY
STRAIGHT-
FROM-THE-
SHOULDER
LANGUAGE



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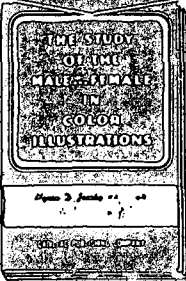
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In his first story about Hecate, he mentions her "priests" who ran the Spanish Inquisition and their brutality. Several times since they have appeared in A.S. and the "priests from Medieval Spain" have popped up again on page 65 of the March issue.

Now you may say that this is only fiction but the fact remains that he claims it is fact and I know at least two persons who accept it as such—in fact one told me, "I'm sure glad that my church never produced anyone like that!"

What I would like to do is mention a few provable FACTS about the Spanish Inquisition. These may be checked and, if I am proven wrong on any major point, I will pay the first person to do so \$100.

The Inquisitorial Court of Seville was established in September, 1480, by Ferdinand and Isabella. By 1484 there were courts also at Cordoba, Jaen and Ciudad Real. The monarchs appointed and deposed the Inquisitors at will and were directed by them with no responsibility to the Pope or Church. (Ranke calls it "a royal tribunal furnished with spiritual weapons.") Ferdinand said to Cardinal Ximenes, "Do you not know that if this council does any jurisdiction whatsoever, it is only owing to the king?"

Besides heresy the Inquisition also punished "polygamy, seduction, smuggling, false personation, and unnatural crimes." (Encyclopedia Americana.)

Now about the number of persons killed, etc. Lloverte, though not a reliable historian but one who cannot be accused of exaggerating in favor of the Inquisition but rather the opposite, places the number killed at 30,000 in the 330 years covered by the Inquisition. (The Inquisition lasted from 1480 to 1810.)

Lloverte, with all his fanatical hate of the Inquisition, points out that at the time "Good Queen Bess" was throwing her religious (not to mention political) prisoners into the foul, underground dungeons of the tower, the prisons of the Inquisition were clean, well ventilated and sanitary. And he also points out that during the reign of Philip II the torture of the Inquisition was less severe than in the civil courts.

Torquemada, the demon incarnate of the Inquisition according to historians, handed 1,000 of the 100,000 that came before him over to the civil authorities. That is to say that the most ferocious of the judges of the Inquisition abandoned one per cent of the accused to the extreme penalty.

These then are Hecate's "priests from Medieval Spain," her "Inquisitors."

Without a doubt, 30,000 killed in 330 years or an average of 100 a year is a large number. Still alongside contemporary (but usually ignored) figures, it is as nothing. The witch burning fever claimed 100,000 in Germany and 30,000 in England (Mackey's "Curious Superstitions,"

DISCUSSIONS

Vol. 1, pg. 237 places the number at 57,000 in the first eighty years of the 17th century but that seems exaggerated), not to mention the thousands of Catholics and nonconformists, such as Puritans, killed by Elizabeth. According to Erasmus 100,000 peasants were killed at Luther's order, who afterwards said, "I, Martin Luther, slew all the peasants in the rebellion." (Werke, Erl. ed. LIX, pg. 294, Table Talk). Calvin, in a five year period, condemned 48 to death in the city of Geneva for daring to disagree with him.

This letter has run to some length but I think that you will agree with me now that Mr. Shaver should check again with Hecate and see whether her "priests" didn't come also from England, Germany, and Switzerland.

That's all except that I'd like to know where he dug up the information that "early Christians were supposed to be taken up to Heaven alive and in plain sight of everyone." (pg. 40.)

Lawrence E. Collison,
U.S.A.T. Richardson,
58th St.,
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Thanks for a very explanatory letter! As for Mr. Shaver's "Spanish Inquisitors" in the caves, all he can tell us is that he has seen their "courts" and describes the clothing they wear, which is that of the days of the Inquisition. As for the early Christians who were taken up alive, our own memory brings to mind only Christ, mentioned by all four apostles as having risen to heaven in plain sight. We remember several prophets of old who performed the feat, however, and Mr. Shaver may have referred to them.—Ed.

TIME AND THE RUSSIAN

Sirs:

I have just laid down my copy of the March issue of AMAZING STORIES, and, with the fond, if fantastic, hope that this might be printed in a future issue of your magazine, I am following up on a strong urge to write you.

Millen Cooke, an author whose name I don't recall seeing in any earlier issues of your magazine (probably due to the fact that I have not been able to obtain every copy), wrote a story called "The Egg of Time," a short story of some 3500 words which probably won't create too much excitement or comment among your fans. As a matter of fact, it wasn't the manner in which the story was written, but the thought contained therein that prompted me to write and relate a story which I heard and consider just as amazing as some of the material previously printed in your magazine.

This story, while not precisely on the same track as Millen Cooke's theory of making time pass swiftly or slowly through the power of the mind, still illustrates the fickleness and the weakness of that old fogey called Time.

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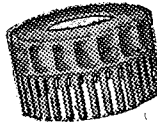
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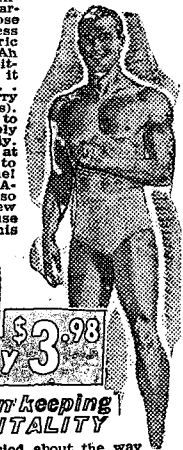
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During the years when Russia and Japan were
on the outs, a Russian in Japan at the time was
thrown into a deep pit; a round hole in the
ground, where he spent twenty-five years of his
life. For ten minutes each day he was taken from
the pit for questioning by the Japanese officials,
and then returned to his "abode" afterward.

For a quarter of a century, this man lived in
a deep, black hole carved out of the earth; the
bottom of which was not wide enough to permit
lying down, compelling him to sit or stand, and
sleep in a most uncomfortable position.

Yet, twenty-five years later when he was re-
leased from imprisonment and removed from
the pit which had been his cell, he was as sane
as the day he entered the hole for the first time!

Each day this Russian passed in the hole, he
relived in his mind a day of his earlier life. He
relived and re-experienced each day of his earli-
est youth until the time of his years of manhood
in his mind in such remarkable detail that it was
actually real to him. This man wasn't a prisoner
suffering twenty-four hours a day in a dark hole
of torment. He was a normal person, living a
normal life, day by day.

Thus, the matter of time in relation to the
power of the mind.

A few notes before I bring this to a close. As
to the exact number of years the man spent in
this hole or some other minor details contained
in this story I couldn't swear, but the general
idea contained therein is based on true fact.

People respect the mind in such an immoderate
degree as to fear its real power. People always
fear things they cannot understand. People are
afraid to try to learn; to try to understand things
which would require some theorizing on their
part. Once a theory is conceived, there is the
fear to express it. Why? It's an old saying,
"It's all in your mind" and is true in more cases
than I'd care to mention.

But, I won't go into that at the present time.
Some day, I'd like to write a letter to you
expressing my theory of the real power and
ability of the mind, but I'll wait and see if this
one is printed first.

Charles C. Hamm,
911 East Ninth Street,
Kansas City 6, Mo.

*We're sure your little story and your remarks
on Time will prove interesting to our readers.
And write any time you feel like it—we always
read letters!—Ed.*

AN INTERESTING LETTER

Sirs:

I have read AMAZING STORIES since the first
issue and I have no criticisms to offer, on either
the stories, pictures or articles but I hereby ten-
der my application as proofreader. Or perhaps
your proofreaders are not at fault. It may be
that your linotype hasn't the ability to spell cor-
rectly. If that is the case I suggest getting a new.

DISCUSSIONS

one. Of course, it couldn't be the "DERO", or could it? Shaver's story in the March issue had more misspelled words in it than any story I have ever seen in your magazine and oddly enough practically every misspelled word started off with the wrong letter.

In December, 1945, my wife and I and another couple went through the Carlsbad cave together. Afterward I asked the two ladies what their sensations were, if any, during the time they were in the cave. They both said that there was a strong feeling of being watched by unseen persons during the entire time they were in the cavern. My wife has always been very psychic.

Last fall, on the Arroyo Seco road in Pasadena a fireman was struck by a rock and killed. The report at the time was that the rock must have been thrown. About two months later at almost the same spot a brother of the fireman who was killed was narrowly missed by another rock. Both stories were published in the Los Angeles Herald-Express. According to the second story the rock fell or was thrown. In neither story was there any statement as to the one who threw the rock, if it was thrown.

During the time all the flying saucers were being seen I saw two objects, disk-like in shape and apparently quite large, about one and one-half miles south of U.S. Highway 60. The time was 8 P.M. of a bright moonlight evening with the moon about four hours high. I was driving east from Moreno and the objects were almost directly in front of me at an elevation of not more than three thousand feet and apparently four or five miles distant. Both objects were completely motionless when first observed. They were a silvery white in color and very distinct and not less than five hundred feet in diameter by about twenty-five to thirty feet in thickness. They remained in position during the time it took me to travel something over a mile at a speed of not more than forty miles per hour and then both objects moved quickly eastward and disappeared over the hills in the direction of Palm Springs. I heard no sound except my own motor.

Several weeks ago at about thirty minutes past midnight I saw some lightning, if it was lightning, entirely different than any I had ever seen before. The lightning appeared to be about fifty to sixty miles distant and each flare extended to about five degrees above the horizon and covered at least sixty degrees horizontally. In color it was a decided blue. I saw seven or eight such flashes in a period of ten minutes. During that time an oil storage tank in the Los Angeles area exploded, though to my knowledge it was not determined whether the tank was struck by lightning.

In November, 1939, I was stationed at Fort Lewis, Washington. I believe it was about the 20th, at a few minutes after midnight I heard the sound of a muffled explosion from the north-

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west. My first thought was that the explosion was at the DuPont Powder works which was about two and one-half miles distant. I was in my quarters when I heard the explosions and immediately started toward the front door to see if there was anything to be seen. Just as I reached the door the house began to sway and I had to cling to the door knob to keep from falling. It was one of the worst earthquakes experienced in that part of the country.

Years ago I read somewhere that someone said he had heard the Northern lights! The explanation given the gentleman was that he had heard an electrical discharge from nearby bushes. Now I was born and raised in Northern Minnesota and during the winter there the Aurora Borealis is very bright and distinct, especially when the temperature is very low. During many a winter evening I have watched the beautiful curtain effect and heard the hissing sound which always accompanied the shifting of the "Curtains" and was always simultaneous with the observed movement of the lights. On some of these occasions there was no brush within a half mile of me, yet the sound was always clear and distinct yet not more so than when I had been close to brush or trees. What I want to know is: Can sound travel instantaneously under some conditions?

I have just finished reading "Gods of Venus" and it is O.K. except that I don't see why it had to end the way that it did. Reminded me of the old movie serials. However, if Shaver is really writing those stories permit me to say that he has developed a nice, smooth style which, though a mite peculiar, is nevertheless capable of holding the reader's interest. More than that you couldn't ask. I have been intensely interested in all of Shaver's stories and articles but as to whether I believe in the deros and all the rest all I can say is that I've an open mind and am not hard to convince if the evidence can be shown me. Now wait a minute, Ed, don't throw that inkwell. Pardon me, I see it is not an inkwell but one of those new fangled pens. Well, that's worse than an inkwell. I am patiently waiting for the proof you have been promising us and I have an idea it will be pretty good.

Can anyone tell me where I may be able to secure copies of the lost books of the Bible? If there are any. Any information will be appreciated.

L. M. Button,
Box 175,
Moreno, Calif.

Your editor's personal opinion is that you did see actual flying discs. They've been pretty well proven lately. As for Shaver, did you see the last issue? It had plenty of proof. We are hopeful you saw it, because it was quite important. As for the lost books of the Bible, why not try your local bookstore?—Ed.

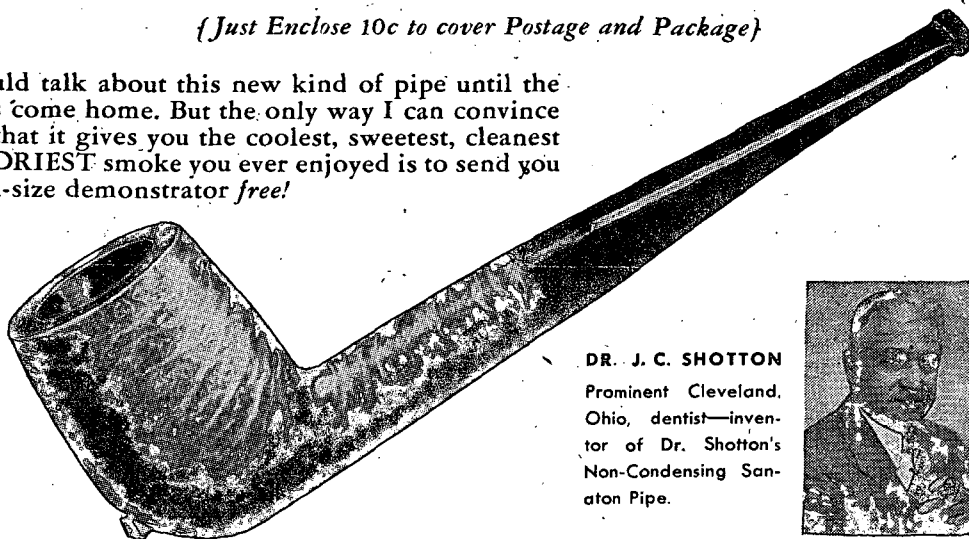
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Be sure to tell me whether you want me to reserve a Regular Sanaton at \$2.50, DeLuxe Sanaton at \$3.75 or Sterling Sanaton at \$5.00. All my Sanatons are made of genuine aged imported briar—the only difference is in the quality, grain and finish. Be sure to let me know whether you prefer a large, medium or small bowl. (Only one demonstrator to a person, please.)

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IF YOU are a pipe smoker, I know how skeptical you are about new pipe inventions. So before expecting you to buy one of my SANATON pipes, I am offering you this DEMONSTRATOR free! My demonstrator will serve the purpose of proving to you that the unique SANATON NON-CONDENSING and EASY-CLEANING features give you the driest, sweetest, coolest and cleanest smoke you ever enjoyed from any pipe, regardless of name, make, or price! I am gambling that if my "demonstrator" does this, you will want one of my better grades. If not, you're out nothing except the 10c I ask for to help pay the postage and handling on the demonstrator.

What This "Demonstrator" Must Prove

Dr. Shotton's non-condensing Sanaton pipe is now being enjoyed by nearly 100,000 pipe smokers—all of whom bought it after trying it! Some of these fellows have been smoking pipes for 30, 40, or even 50 years. Some have from 50 to 200 pipes in their collections, and they like the Sanaton better than all the rest put together! There must be a reason, and here it is:

Most ordinary pipes, as you know, are equipped with tubes, traps, filters, baffles and gadgets of all kinds whose purpose it is to catch and hold "goo." However, Dr. Shotton knew that these gadgets actually caused condensation of the "goo" they collected—just as a cool pitcher of ice water in a warm room causes moisture to condense on the outer surface of the glass! He realized that the *real secret* of a dry, sweet pipe is to prevent "goo" from forming at all!

Now, what did Dr. Shotton do? Well, instead of placing a catch-all gadget in the Sanaton pipe, he placed a small slotted tube at the bottom of the bowl! This tube acts as a NON-condenser, for as you light this pipe, the tube warms up—and there's no cold surface on which "goo" can condense! No condensation, no "goo"! It's as simple as that!

Then Dr. Shotton went a step further. He extended the non-condenser tube through the back wall of the pipe and attached a tiny removable screw. Whenever you want to clean out the tar that results from tobacco combustion, just remove the screw and run a regular pipe cleaner through from end to end. The Sanaton cleans like a gun!

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Pays Hospital Benefits for Accidents

The average family has an income of \$65 a week or less. Because of the high cost of living, they can't save money to meet sudden doctor or hospital bills, in case accident or sickness strikes. Therefore, the 60-year-old North American Accident Insurance Company of Chicago announces a special plan which gives just the kind of protection such families should have. It pays \$25 a week for 10 weeks for certain specified accidents and sicknesses. Also, this Premier Limited Double Duty Policy pays \$25 a week for 4 weeks for accidents requiring hospital confinement. Yet the total cost is only \$12 a year. The purpose of this new policy is to bring sickness and accident protection within the reach of men and women who do not have large savings with which to meet sudden doctor or hospital bills, or lost income.

This new plan also has a double-indemnity feature covering travel accidents. You receive \$50 a week if disabled by an accident in a bus, taxicab, street car, train, etc., and \$75 a week if the accident requires hospital confinement. There is another new special feature that pays up to \$25 cash for doctor bills, even for a minor accident such as a cut finger. In case of accidental death the policy pays one thousand dollars cash to your family. Two thousand dollars if caused by a travel accident.

In addition, it covers many sicknesses including pneumonia, cancer, appendicitis operation, etc., paying the weekly benefits whether confined to home or hospital.

The entire cost is only \$12 a year (even this small amount can be paid monthly—\$2.50 down and \$2.00 a month for 5 months—total cost \$12.50) for both men and women between the ages of 15 and 64 inclusive. Between the ages of 65 and 75 the cost is only \$18 a year. Protects you 24 hours a day. No reduction in benefits regardless of age. No medical examination is required.

Suppose you are now a member of some worthy hospitalization plan . . . you still need this additional protection. Why? Because only a small percentage of people are confined to a hospital—and even then only for a fraction of the time they are disabled. Most people are confined at home where hospitalization plans do not apply. The North American Plan pays specified benefits regardless of whether you are confined to your home or to a hospital.

North American Accident Insurance Company of Chicago has devoted over sixty years to the underwriting of Accident and Health Insurance. It has paid out over \$43,000,000 to grateful policy holders when they needed help most. North American is licensed by the Insurance Department of 47 States and The District of Columbia.

Men and women who would like full details about this new plan are urged to write a letter or postcard for a revealing booklet called "Cash or Sympathy." This booklet is absolutely free. It will come by ordinary mail without charge or obligation of any kind. No agent will call to deliver it. We suggest you get a free copy by mailing coupon to Premier Policy Division, North American Accident Insurance Co. of Chicago, 830 Broad Street, Dept. 151, Newark 2, New Jersey.

MAIL THIS COUPON FOR FREE BOOKLET

☐ North American Accident Insurance Company, Premier
830 Broad St., Dept. 151, Newark 2, New Jersey Policy
Division

☐ Gentlemen:

☐ Please send me a copy of your FREE booklet, "CASH OR
SYMPATHY." I understand there is no obligation whatever,
and that no one will call on me to deliver this booklet.

☐ NAME

☐ ADDRESS

☐ CITY ZONE NO. STATE